

BALTIMORE™

THE CURSE BELLS

MIKE
MIGNOLA

CHRISTOPHER
GOLDEN

BEN
STENBECK

DAVE
STEWART



M
2011



*A bloody birth provokes terror in
a small European town, as Lord
Baltimore takes on the twisted
blessings of vampiric nuns and an
insane warlock while continuing his
hunt for the creature at the heart of
his obsession!*

BALTIMORE

The Curse Bells





BALTIMORETM

THE CURSE BELLS

VOLUME TWO

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CHRISTOPHER GOLDEN

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Publisher **MIKE RICHARDSON**



DARK HORSE BOOKS®

*For the great Peter Cushing, whose hollow-cheeked spirit
certainly lives in (or haunts) these pages.*

—Mike Mignola

*For my brother, Jamie, who kept me company during
hundreds of Creature Double Features.*

—Christopher Golden

For Bernie Wrightson.

—Ben Stenbeck

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This volume collects the *Baltimore: The Curse Bells* comic-book series,
issues #1–#5, published by Dark Horse Comics.

A WORLD OF CHILLED SHADOWS

by
JOE R. LANSDALE



THERE'S NOT A LOT THESE DAYS creepier than politics, but here's something that is, and the good thing about it is when it's over you can enjoy it again without it messing with your life, unlike politics.

But that's not entirely true if it hits you the way it hit me. *The Curse Bells* will continue to mess with my life, my head, but the messing is of a darkly entertaining kind: hot-flash visuals like someone pulling an old strip of film through the brain, flossing into it eerie images so deep they leave scar tissue. What we have here is a perfect dark wedding of word and picture with the shade of Bram Stoker as best man, for the feelings I had while reading *The Curse Bells* were akin to the feelings I had when I first read Stoker's *Dracula* on a wet day in Austin, Texas, in the early seventies. I was living in a co-op then, a few months away from a collapsing marriage—thank goodness, or I wouldn't have met my current, wonderful wife. The co-op was a kind of shared housing where we had our own rooms but did chores to keep the place up. I remember I was alone that day and I also remember being sick of school and sick of the fact I was going to the University of Texas instead of writing, which is what I knew I was born to do, and sick of washing other people's dishes who didn't wash mine, so I skipped class and hid out in my

room, settled into bed with *Dracula* (the book, not the creature of the night) on a wet day with the air conditioner turned up so high it was as cold as a polar bear's nose. I cocooned myself beneath the blankets, my head and book and hands barely poking out, opened the book, and was instantly invited into Bram Stoker's gothic world through the aid of what Tarzan called little bugs—meaning words, of course.

This series, *The Curse Bells*, puts me in the exact same frame of mind as *Dracula* did on that fine and wonderful day so long ago, though it uses both words and visuals.

I don't mean the story reminds me of *Dracula* altogether, though they are kissing cousins, and may in fact be more intimate than that. But like *Dracula*, *The Curse Bells* is the kind of narrative that grabs and pulls you into the tale, pulls you down deep and dark as a child that has fallen into a well.

Reading it also brought to mind the Universal horror films of old, with their wonderfully gothic sets and shifty-eyed peasants and shambling monsters and fluttering bats. This film on paper, this comic, goes where your mind went when you saw those films as a kid, goes where the film didn't, but you think it did, because at that age your mind is fresh and open and full of light and shadow, all of it moving about in savage flickers, having not

yet settled and found its civilized position. For everything you see with your eyes at that age, your mind's eye sees a hundred times more. Our personalities and imaginations are forming then; there are open doors through which light and shadow come. None of those doors have closed due to age and experience.

When we get older it's said that nothing is as fresh and bold and enticing as it once was, but I beg to differ. Not all of us closed those doors. The creators involved with this beautifully tantalizing creep of an adventure certainly did not close theirs. And frankly, though my imaginative doors are still wide open, if they weren't, this beautifully strange work would kick them wide open again. Isn't that the job of all great art, to kick open doors to light and shadow and let us view something that otherwise we might not see?

I think it is.

And this fine piece of work sure does it. I was absorbed by the story written by Mike Mignola and Christopher Golden, entranced by the art of Ben Stenbeck, the setups, the simple use of color. No cute and weird angles and a story you can't follow because you don't know which panel you're supposed to be reading. No real tricks are used or are needed here. You don't have to distract from your limitations when you have pure storytelling in your grasp.

There's a lot of cool characterization and attention to detail, and I want to point that out, but this is one of those magic things. Somewhat inexplicable and wonderful and strange: a beast from within. The best thing I can say is the appeal of this kind of story is primal. It's tapping into something that comes not from purely conscious consideration, but from the depths of the subconscious. A lot of internal human fears are here, made into story without obvious intent of sculpture. No chip marks are on the statue.

My only dislike of this series is how swiftly it ended. I was so caught up in it I breezed

through the first four issues breathless; then realized, my goodness, they forgot to send me the fifth. I wrote Chris Golden a hasty e-mail, and he was able to supply me with the last issue via return e-mail, and I promptly read it, sitting at the computer.

Man, what a finale.

Okay. I'm starting to sound like a child that has discovered his first piece of candy.

So, enough. I dislike discussing a story too much, mine or anyone else's. I think it's like handling something beautiful, freshly painted, and having the paint come off in your hands. You don't want to do that. You want it to stay clean and bright, or in this case, dark in your mind.

Mike Mignola. Christopher Golden. You have a beautiful story. Ben Stenbeck. Dave Stewart. You have made simple sublime. Clem Robins, you cool letterer, you. Listen up, you guys. I just want to say one thing to you: You done good.

Oh hell, make it two things. The other: More, please.

Joe R. Lansdale
Nacogdoches, Texas
December 2011

CHAPTER ONE





LUCERNE, SWITZERLAND.
LATE OCTOBER, 1916.

THE DAYS AND
WEEKS PASS, BUT
MY HUNT GOES ON.

IT'S MORE THAN A
YEAR, NOW, SINCE THE
PLAGUE BROUGHT THE
GREAT WAR TO AN END.

BUT THE PLAGUE WASN'T
THE ONLY THING PREYING ON
THE PEOPLES OF EUROPE.
THE WAR HAD AWAKENED
ANCIENT EVILS, AND MORE
ARE WAKING BY THE DAY.

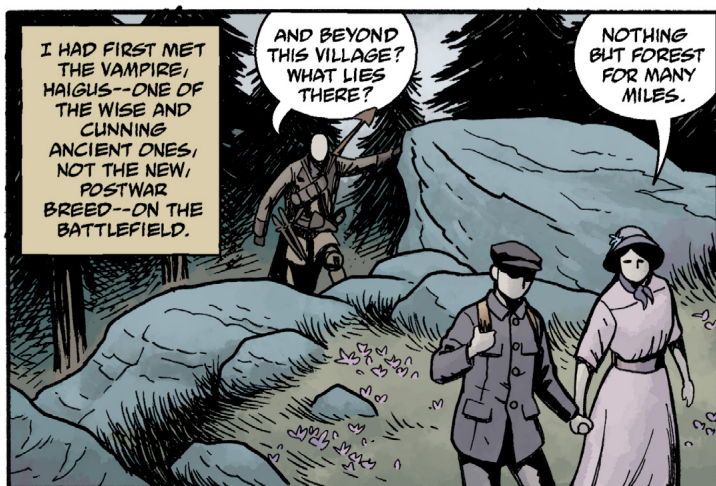
YOU'RE
ABSOLUTELY
CERTAIN THAT
THE MAN I
DESCRIBED
CAME THIS
WAY?

I TOLD YOU, WE WERE
VISITING MY AUNT IN
STILLE AND SAW HIM
THERE. WE RECOGNIZED
HIM BECAUSE WE'D
SEEN HIM IN LUCERNE
THE NIGHT
BEFORE LAST.

I'M GLAD
HE DIDN'T SEE
US. THERE'S
SOMETHING
ABOUT HIM THAT
GAVE ME A
SHIVER.

BUT IT
WAS HIM.
THE MOON
WAS BRIGHT
ENOUGH
TO SEE
CLEARLY.

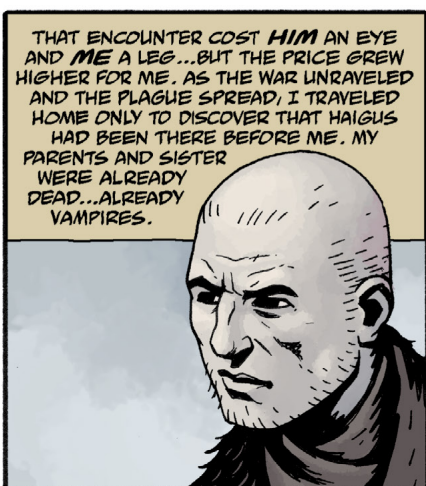
IT ISN'T EVERY DAY
YOU ENCOUNTER A
ONE-EYED MAN, AND
WITH THAT SCAR,
IT WOULD BE HARD
TO MISTAKE HIM
FOR SOMEONE
ELSE.



I HAD FIRST MET THE VAMPIRE, HAIGUS--ONE OF THE WISE AND CUNNING ANCIENT ONES, NOT THE NEW, POSTWAR BREED--ON THE BATTLEFIELD.

AND BEYOND THIS VILLAGE? WHAT LIES THERE?

NOTHING BUT FOREST FOR MANY MILES.



THAT ENCOUNTER COST **HIM** AN EYE AND **ME** A LEG...BUT THE PRICE GREW HIGHER FOR ME. AS THE WAR UNRAVELED AND THE PLAGUE SPREAD, I TRAVELED HOME ONLY TO DISCOVER THAT HAIGUS HAD BEEN THERE BEFORE ME. MY PARENTS AND SISTER WERE ALREADY DEAD...ALREADY VAMPIRES.



BUT HAIGUS HAD LEFT MY WIFE, ELOWEN, UNTOUCHED. HE WAITED FOR ME BEFORE TEARING HER THROAT AND INFECTING HER WITH HIS EVIL.

I HUNTED THEM ALL...THE MONSTERS MY FAMILY HAD BECOME...AND I RETURNED THEM TO THEIR GRAVES.



YET I WILL NEVER SHARE THEIR PEACE UNTIL I HAVE FOUND HAIGUS AND DESTROYED HIM UTTERLY.

OH, HANS. IT'S AWFUL.



THE POOR THINGS.



STAY BEHIND ME, BOTH OF YOU. AND IF I TELL YOU TO RUN, THEN YOU MUST FLY AS FAST AS YOUR LEGS WILL CARRY YOU.





THIS IS WHAT HAIGUS LEAVES BEHIND.

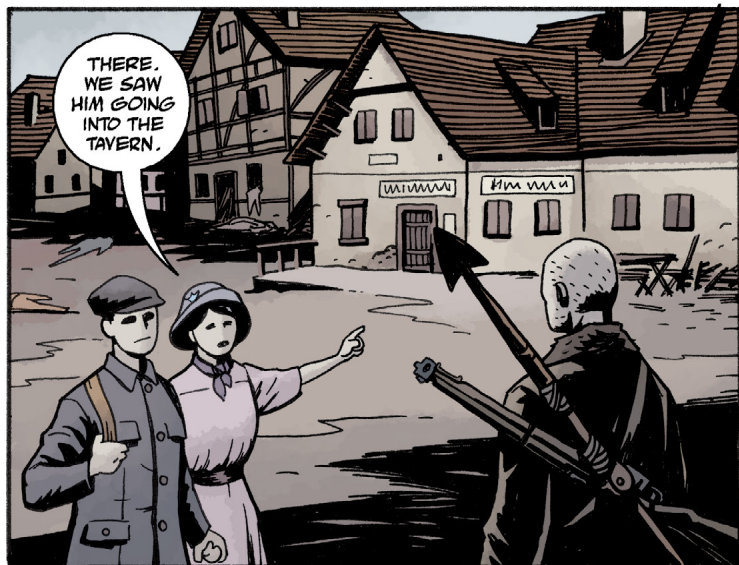
DEAD... THEY'RE ALL DEAD.

YES, AND RECENTLY. WHICH MEANS HE MAY STILL BE HERE.

PLEASE, LET'S LEAVE THIS PLACE.

SHOW ME THE PLACE WHERE YOU SAW THE SCARRED MAN, AND I'LL PAY WHAT WE AGREED. THEN YOU CAN GO, AND SCREAM ALL YOU LIKE.







WE NEED TO GO.

THEY CAN'T COME OUT INTO THE SUN.

AND WE'RE NOT LEAVING UNTIL WE'RE PAID WHAT WAS PROMISED.



YOU WOULD CUT YOUR OWN THROATS IF HE ORDERED IT. BUT YOU'LL HAVE YOUR COINS.



CLINK



WHERE IS HAIGUS?

SHUNK





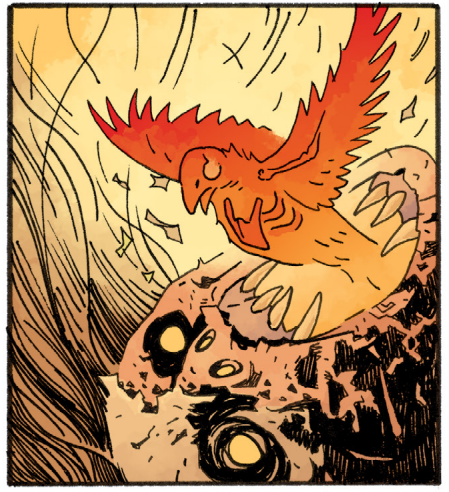
CONGRATULATIONS,
LORD BALTIMORE.
YOU'VE EARNED YOUR
PRIZE.

HAIGUS
HAS LEFT US AS
A GIFT TO YOU, A
REWARD FOR YOUR
EFFORTS, BEFORE
YOU DIE.

WHERE
IS HE,
DAMN
YOU?









DO YOUR **WORST**,
DEMONS. YOU
WON'T FARE ANY
BETTER THAN
HAIGUS'S
LEECHES!



OH, BUT
I THINK WE
WILL.



SHUPT

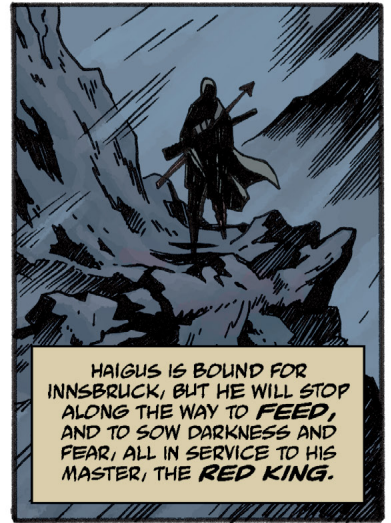


AGGGHH!





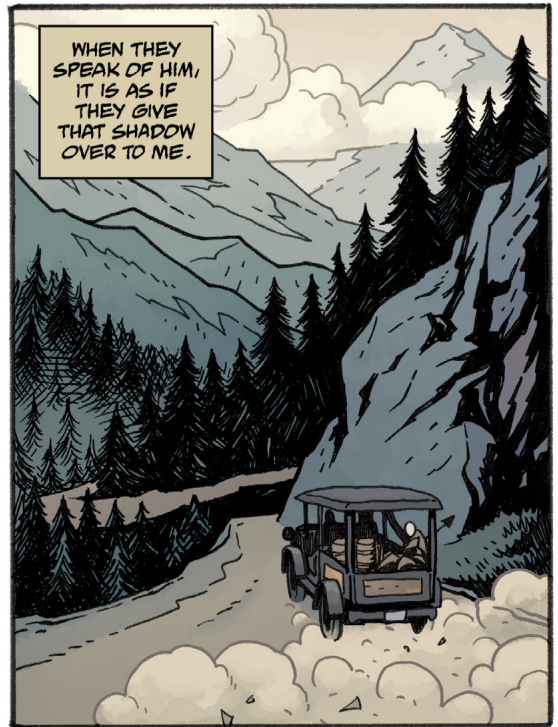
17 OCTOBER, 1916.



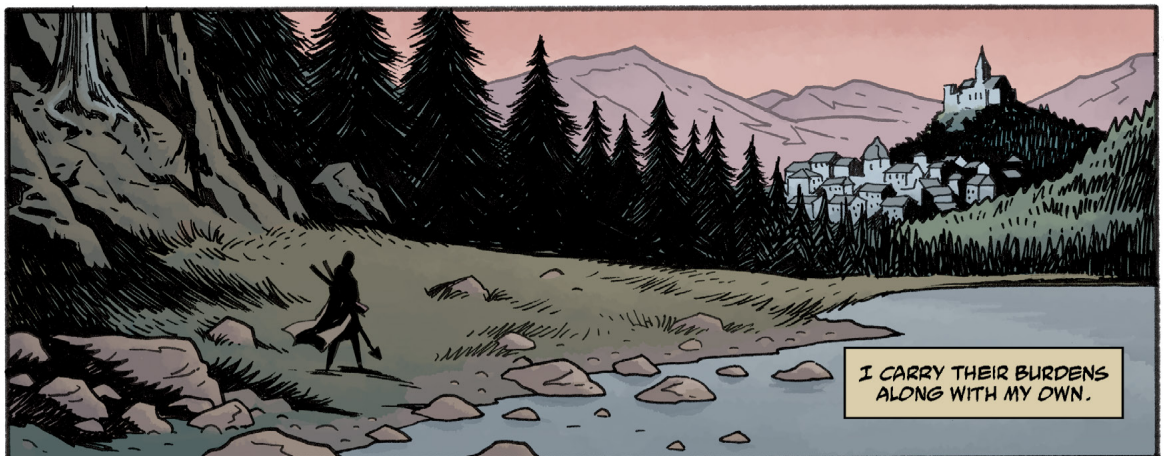
HAIGUS IS BOUND FOR INNSBRUCK, BUT HE WILL STOP ALONG THE WAY TO **FEED**, AND TO SOW DARKNESS AND FEAR, ALL IN SERVICE TO HIS MASTER, THE **RED KING**.



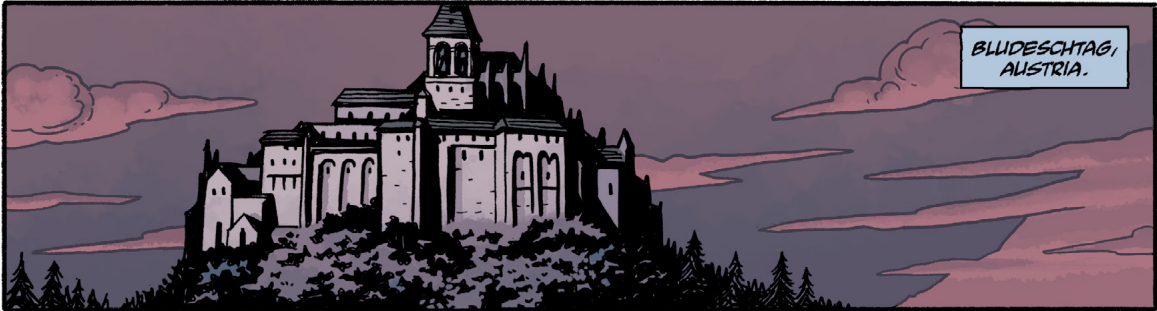
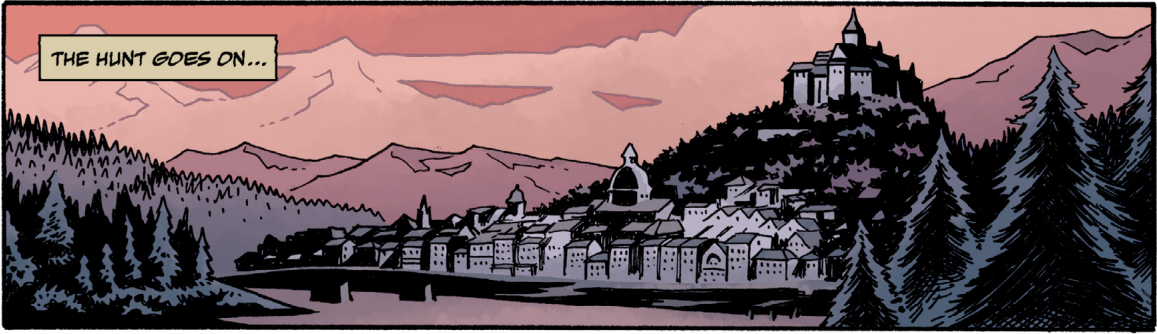
THOSE WHO ENCOUNTER HAIGUS--EVEN WHEN HE WEARS THE PRETENSE OF HUMANITY--ARE CHILLED BY HIM, AS IF A SHADOW HAS FALLEN OVER THEIR SOULS.

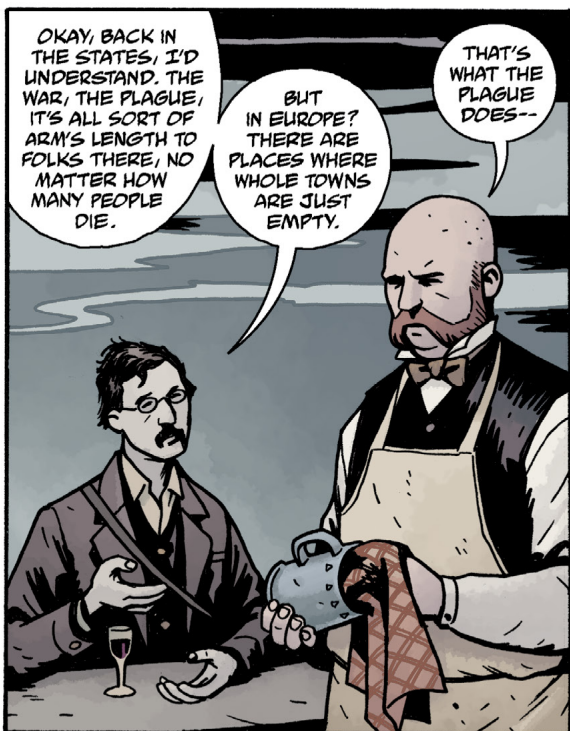


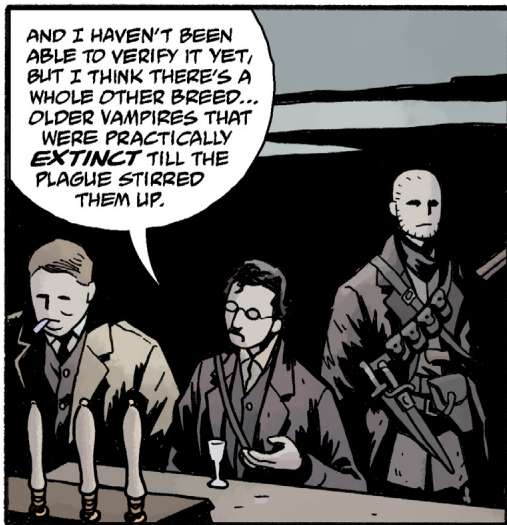
WHEN THEY SPEAK OF HIM, IT IS AS IF THEY GIVE THAT SHADOW OVER TO ME.

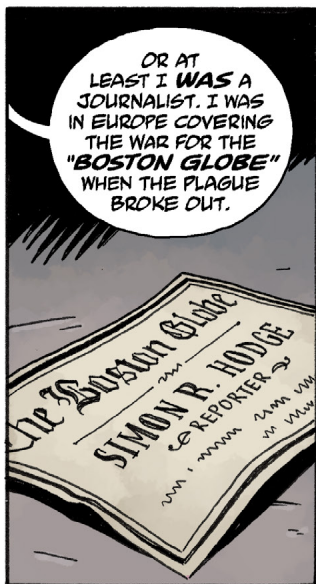


I CARRY THEIR BURDENS ALONG WITH MY OWN.











AND NOW WHAT, MR. HODGE? YOU DRINK WHISKEY AND TRY TO SAVE THE WORLD FROM THE UNDEAD?

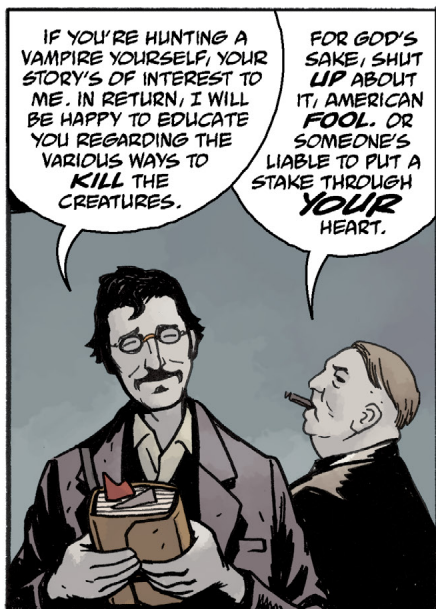
I'M GOING TO WRITE A BOOK. IF THE "**GLOBE**" WON'T PUBLISH THE TRUTH, **SOMEONE** WILL.



I INTEND TO BECOME THE **WORLD'S FOREMOST AUTHORITY** ON VAMPIRES.



I'VE BEEN TRAVELING EUROPE FOR MONTHS. YOU'D BE **ASTONISHED** AT THE THINGS I'VE DISCOVERED.



IF YOU'RE HUNTING A VAMPIRE YOURSELF, YOUR STORY'S OF INTEREST TO ME. IN RETURN, I WILL BE HAPPY TO EDUCATE YOU REGARDING THE VARIOUS WAYS TO **KILL** THE CREATURES.

FOR GOD'S SAKE, SHUT **UP** ABOUT IT, AMERICAN **FOOL**. OR SOMEONE'S LIABLE TO PUT A STAKE THROUGH **YOUR** HEART.



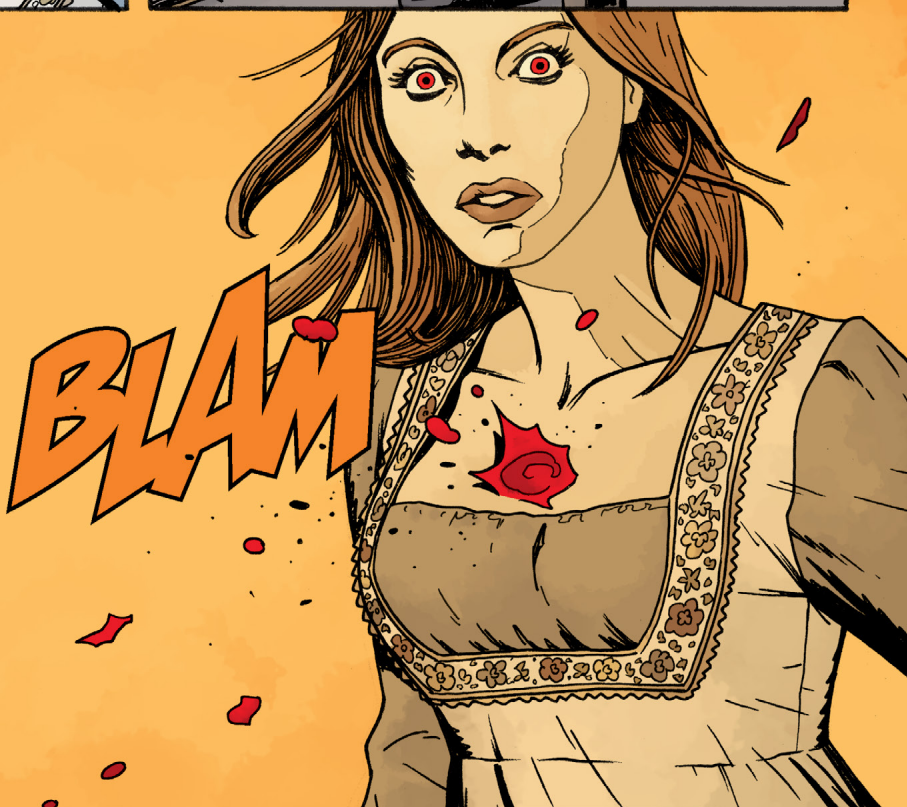
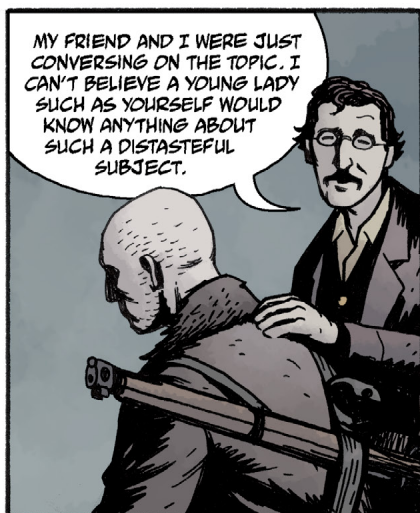
I'VE TOLD MY STORY ONE TIME TOO MANY. BUT IF YOU'VE ANY INFORMATION ABOUT VAMPIRES HERE IN BLUDESCHTAG--

ABSOLUTELY. HAPPY TO HELP. BUT FAIR'S FAIR, MISTER...

LORD HENRY BALTIMORE, MR. HODGE.



LORD BALTIMORE. A PLEASURE, SIR. NOW, SHALL WE DISCUSS AN EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION?







"I RELATED WHAT I'D BEEN TOLD, THAT THE NUNS WERE CLOISTERED, THAT NO ONE WAS ALLOWED INSIDE THE WALLS, EVEN IF ANYONE HAD THE COURAGE TO INVESTIGATE. IF THE NUNS WANTED HELP, THEY COULD HAVE ASKED FOR IT. THEY COULD HAVE RUNG THE OLD BELLS, WHICH THE LOCALS TELL ME HAVE NOT BEEN RUNG IN A VERY LONG TIME."



"I THINK HE MAY HAVE GONE TO THE CONVENT, THIS HAIGUS FELLOW."



"ABSURD, OF COURSE. THERE IS NO CURE FOR EITHER."

"YOU'RE WRONG, MR. HODGE. IT'S DEATH."

DEATH IS THE CURE.



CHAPTER TWO









THE SISTERS STAND SENTRY ON THE WALLS, LIKE CASTLE GUARDS. I THOUGHT THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO BE ILL WITH PLAGUE.

MAYBE SOME OF THEM ARE. OR MAYBE THEY WERE.



"THE REAL QUESTION A JOURNALIST SUCH AS YOURSELF OUGHT TO BE ASKING IS, 'WHAT, OR WHO, ARE THEY GUARDING?'"



YOU THINK IT'S THE VAMPIRE YOU HUNT? THIS HAIGUS CREATURE?

YOU TOLD ME YOURSELF THAT HE MIGHT BE THERE. IT MAY BE ONLY THIS BAVARIAN SOLDIER WHO CLAIMED HE COULD CURE THE PLAGUE.



I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'LL FIND IN THERE. THAT MEANS I GO ALONE. IF YOU WANT TO WAIT FOR ME HERE, THAT'S UP TO YOU. BUT YOU'LL NEED SOMETHING TO PROTECT YOURSELF.

JUST IN CASE.



IN CASE OF WHAT?



"IN CASE
I STIR UP A
HORNETS'
NEST."



DRINK,
WOMAN.
YOUR TIME
HAS ALMOST
COME.

SOON,
YOU GIVE
BIRTH TO A
MIRACLE.









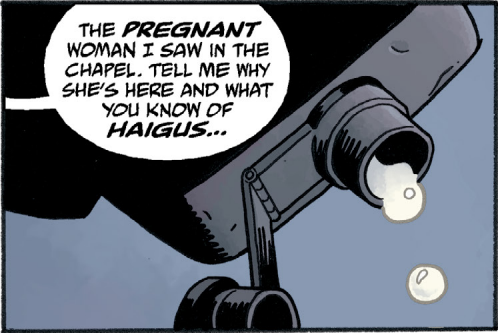


I SEEK A **ONE-EYED VAMPIRE** BY THE NAME OF **HAIGUS**. I'M TOLD HE MAY BE HERE.

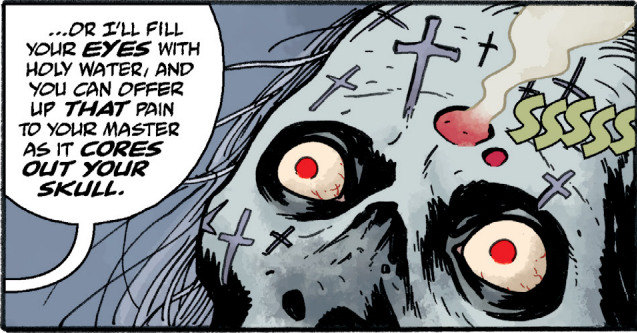
GIVE YOURSELF TO THE MASTER. YOU ARE **HALF-DEAD** ALREADY.



YOU MAY NOT FEAR THE PAIN OF THE **CROSS**, BUT THERE ARE **OTHER** WAYS FOR ME TO HURT YOU.



THE **PREGNANT** WOMAN I SAW IN THE CHAPEL. TELL ME WHY SHE'S HERE AND WHAT YOU KNOW OF **HAIGUS**...



...OR I'LL FILL YOUR **EYES** WITH HOLY WATER, AND YOU CAN OFFER UP **THAT** PAIN TO YOUR MASTER AS IT **CORES** OUT YOUR **SKULL**.

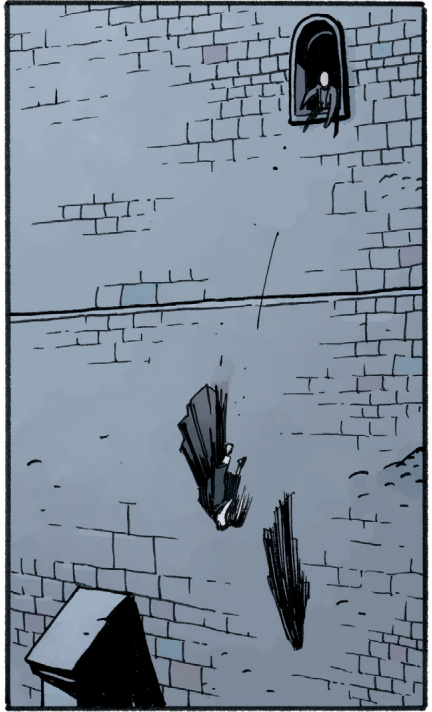


IT'S NO **CHILD** IN THE WOMAN'S BELLY. THE MASTER MIXES **HUMAN** ASHES FROM A DEAD WITCH WITH THE BLOOD OF ONE OF THE **OLD VAMPIRES**.

IT MAY **BE** YOUR VAMPIRE. I DON'T KNOW ITS NAME, BUT THE **DEAD WITCH** IS CALLED **BLAVATSKY**. THE MASTER BELIEVES HE CAN MAKE HER BE **BORN** AGAIN.



HORRIBLE.







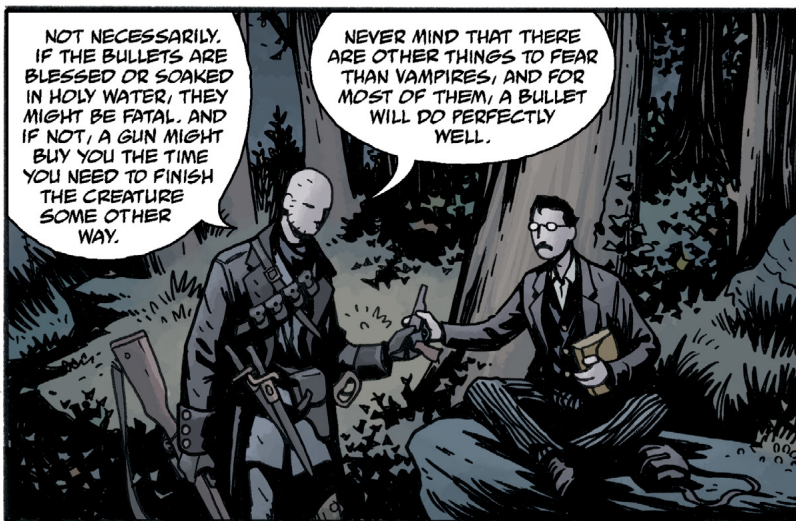
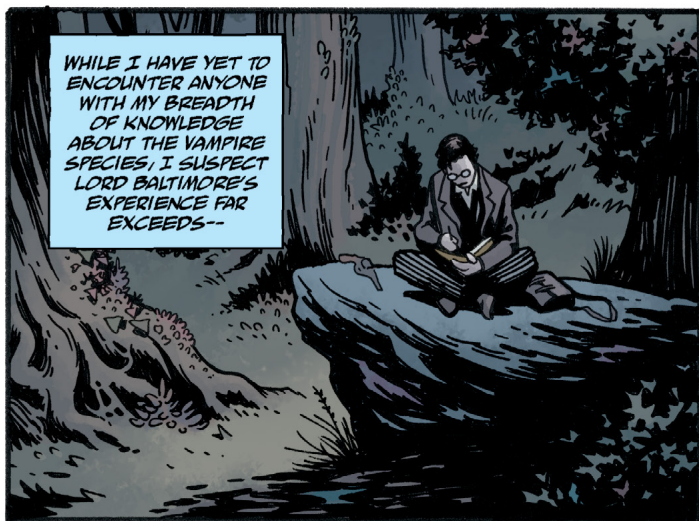
AGH!

JUST A LITTLE MORE, OLD ONE. YOUR PAIN IS A PART OF THE RITUAL, BUT WHEN I'M THROUGH, IT WON'T BE NECESSARY ANY LONGER.

IN FACT, IT MAY BE THAT **YOU** WON'T BE NECESSARY ANY LONGER.

WON'T THAT BE A RELIEF FOR **BOTH** OF US?





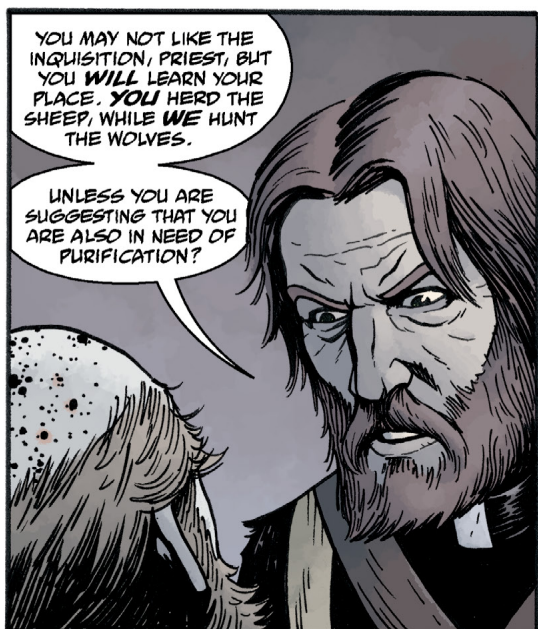


LUCERNE,
SWITZERLAND.

"THE MAN I SEEK, LORD HENRY BALTIMORE, HAS BEEN TOUCHED BY VAMPIRES AND DEVILS. IF HE IS NOT IN LEAGUE WITH THEM, AT THE VERY LEAST HE IS TAINTED, AND MUST BE PURIFIED."



ALL OF EUROPE HAS BEEN TOUCHED WITH VAMPIRES AND DEVILS, JUDGE DUVIC. IS THIS MAN SO MUCH DIFFERENT FROM THE REST OF US?



YOU MAY NOT LIKE THE INQUISITION, PRIEST, BUT YOU **WILL** LEARN YOUR PLACE. **YOU** HERD THE SHEEP, WHILE **WE** HUNT THE WOLVES.

UNLESS YOU ARE SUGGESTING THAT YOU ARE ALSO IN NEED OF PURIFICATION?



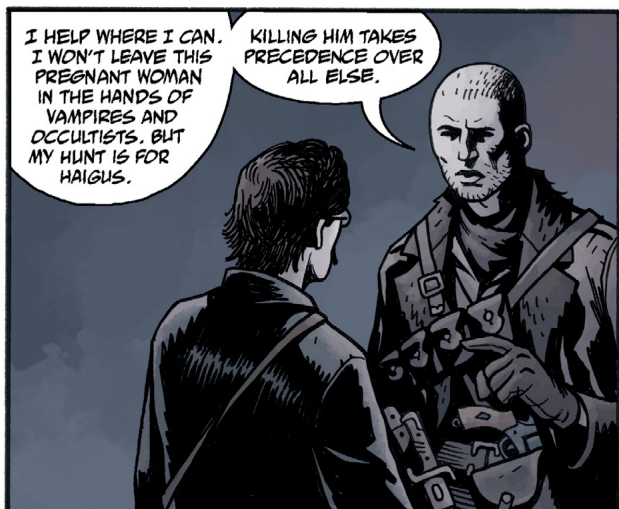
NOT AT ALL. THERE ARE NO DEVILS HERE. THOUGH I HAVE HEARD RUMORS OF VAMPIRES IN THE FOREST.

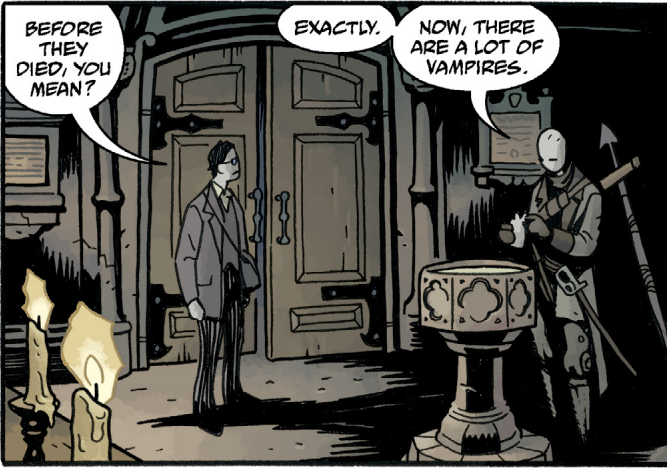


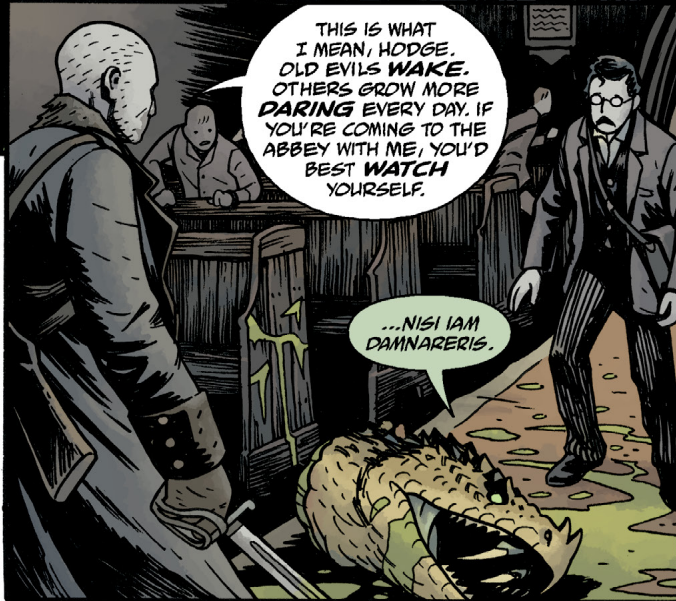
AS FOR THIS LORD BALTIMORE, I SWEAR I HAVE NOT SEEN HIM.

BUT IF HE CAME THIS WAY, SOMEONE MUST HAVE. A MAN LIKE THAT, CARRYING SO MANY WEAPONS, IS SURE TO HAVE BEEN NOTICED.



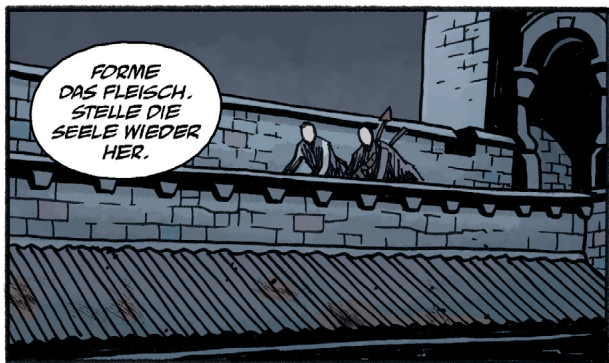












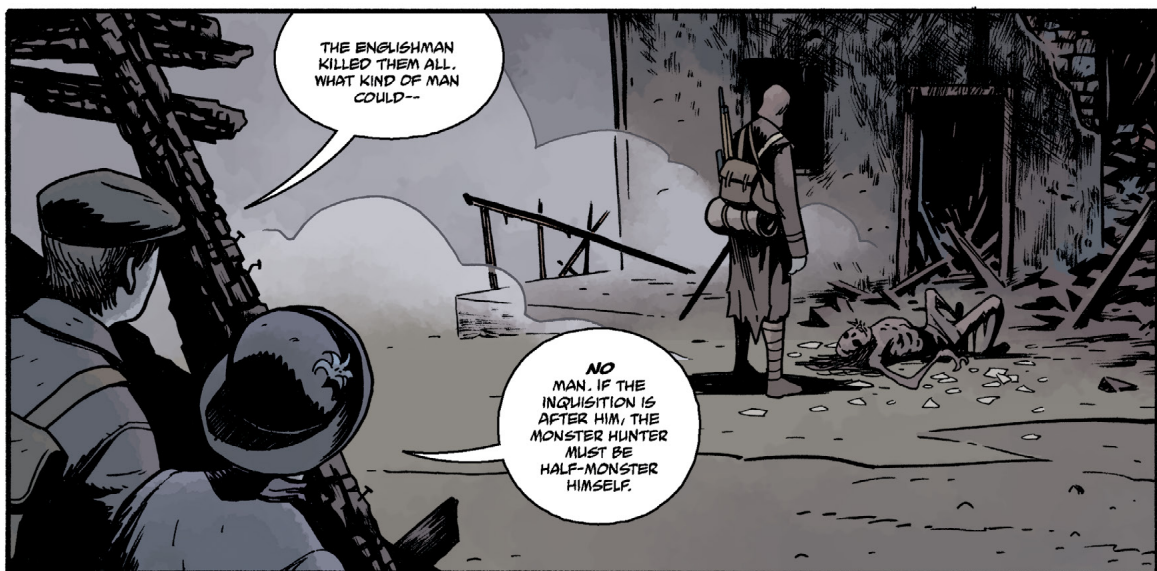


CHAPTER THREE











THE ODDS ARE **NOT** IN OUR FAVOR, MR. HODGE.

YOU DON'T **SAY??** AND HERE I THOUGHT WE WERE DOING **SO WELL!**

BLAM!

BLAM!



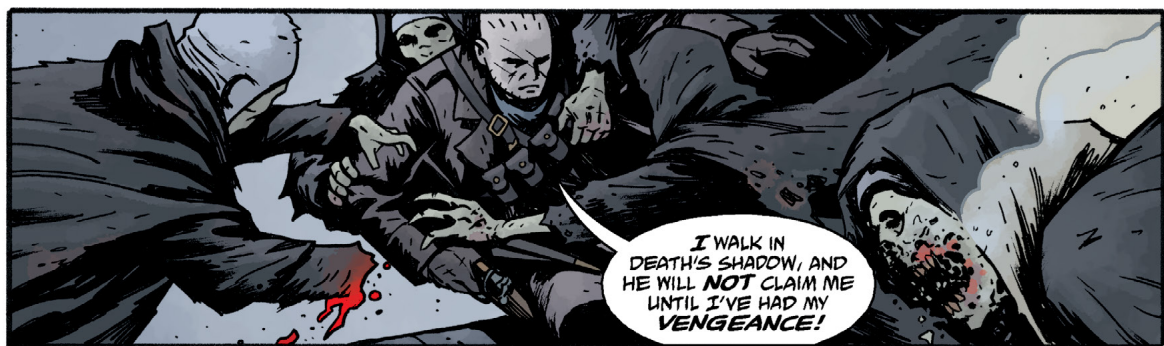
BLUESCHTAG, AUSTRIA.

SHALL WE HELP OUR SISTERS, MASTER?

NO. THE RITUAL MUST BE COMPLETED.

"THOSE FOOLS HAVE INTRUDED IN TIME TO BEAR WITNESS...BUT THEY CAN DO NOTHING TO PREVENT THE **BIRTH.**"









YOU
STILL
WORSHIP
GOD?



PRAYER **BURNS**
US, BUT **STILL** WE
PRAY. THE MASTER
HAS PROMISED TO
RESTORE US TO
GOD'S GRACES, TO
TAKE THE **CURSE**
FROM US.

HE
LIES.



AAGH!
GOD, THE
PAIN!

GLORIOUS
PAIN, MY
DEAR.

THE
SOONER YOU
SURRENDER TO
IT, THE SOONER
YOUR PAIN WILL
END.

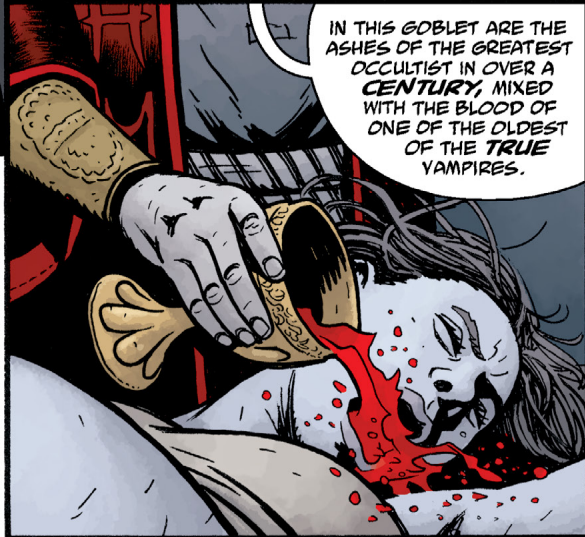


FOR
GOD'S SAKE,
DO SOME-
THING!



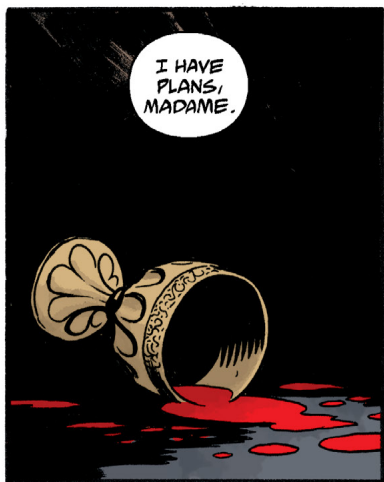
**FORME DAS FLEISCH! STELLE
DIE SEELE WIEDER HER!**

RELEASE
HER, WARLOCK!









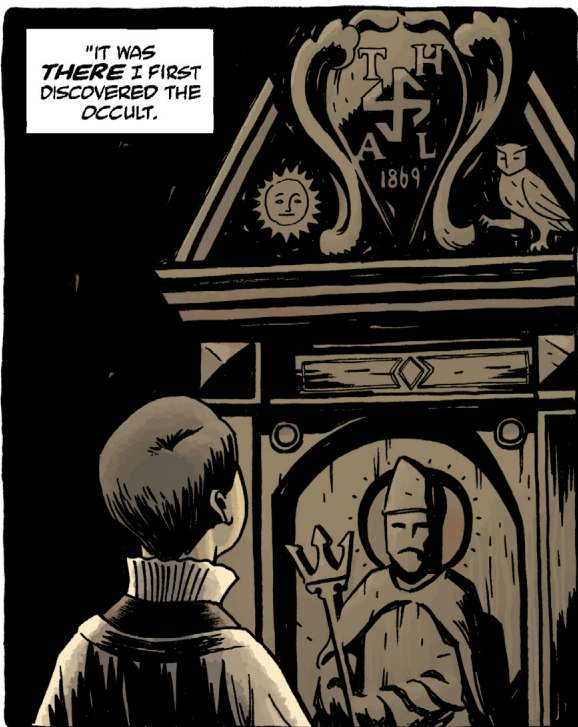
I HAVE
PLANS,
MADAME.



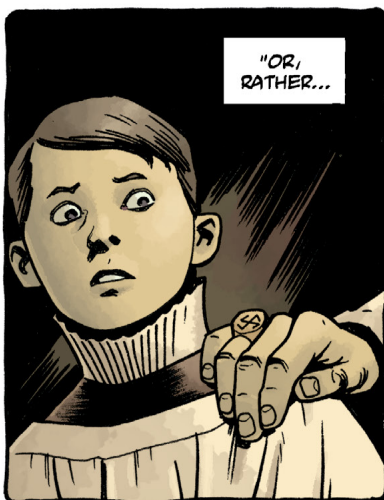
"I
ALWAYS
HAVE.



"WHEN I WAS EIGHT
YEARS OLD, MY FATHER--
A HATEFUL MAN--PUT
ME IN A CATHOLIC
SCHOOL IN LAMBACH.



"IT WAS
THERE I FIRST
DISCOVERED THE
OCCULT.



"OR,
RATHER...



"...IT
DISCOVERED
ME.



"I LEARNED A GREAT DEAL AT SCHOOL...



"...THOUGH NOT WHAT MY FATHER **WISHED** FOR ME TO LEARN.

"WE MOVED FROM LAMBACH THE FOLLOWING YEAR, INTERRUPTING THE ONLY STUDIES THAT MATTERED TO ME.



"BUT I HAD A **TASTE** FOR THE OCCULT, NOW, AND IT WOULD **NOT** BE DENIED. I BEGAN TO EXPERIMENT WITH WHAT LITTLE I ALREADY KNEW.



"**ONE** SUCH EXPERIMENT COST MY YOUNGER BROTHER HIS LIFE. HIS DEATH BROKE MY FATHER'S SPIRIT.



"WHEN MY **FATHER** DIED SUDDENLY, IT WAS A MERCY FOR US BOTH.

"I THOUGHT ALL WOULD BE WELL. THAT MY MOTHER WOULD CARE FOR ME. BUT **PEACE** WAS **FLEETING**. CANCER WHITTLED AWAY AT HER, BODY AND SOUL.

"I DID WHAT I COULD TO SAVE HER, BUT I KNEW TOO LITTLE. MY POWERS WERE NOT GREAT ENOUGH.

The panel shows a man lying in a bed, looking ill. The room is dimly lit by several lit candles on the floor. The walls are covered with various occult symbols and numbers. The man's expression is one of despair and exhaustion.

"I ATTEMPTED TO USE **ART** TO EXPLORE THE DARKNESS. BUT IT WASN'T ENOUGH. I CRAVED **REAL** KNOWLEDGE.

"WHEN WAR BROKE OUT, I JOINED THE ARMY.

The panel shows a man in a light-colored shirt and dark pants, seen from the back, painting a dark, abstract scene on a canvas. He is in a room with other canvases and art supplies. The lighting is dramatic, with strong shadows.

"THE NIGHT WE ENCOUNTERED OUR FIRST **VAMPIRE**, THE OTHER MEN WERE **TERRIFIED**, BUT I FELT ONLY JOY THAT SUCH A THING COULD EXIST.

"IF THEY HADN'T INSISTED WE KILL IT, I WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO FORCE IT TO SURRENDER ITS SECRETS.

The panel shows a group of soldiers in a battlefield. One soldier in the foreground is sitting on the ground, looking up in shock. Other soldiers are standing around him, some holding rifles. In the background, there is a large, dark, hairy creature with a long neck and a small head, which is the vampire. The scene is set in a dark, desolate landscape with barbed wire and a large tree.

"BUT SOON, ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED ITSELF."

MY...MY SWEET CHILD...THE YOU'VE SNATCHED HER FROM MY ARMS! MESMERIZED ME WITH THAT MONSTROUS **RED** EYE AND STOLE HER AWAY.

MA MERE SAYS IT **EATS** THEM...**EATS** THE YOUNG ONES.

The panel shows a woman in a light-colored dress being held by two soldiers in dark uniforms. The woman has a distressed expression. The soldiers are holding her from behind. The background is dark and indistinct.

"ALL MY PLAN REQUIRED WAS A LURE, AND SO I TOOK ONE.

The panel shows a baby lying on its back on the ground, with its arms and legs spread out. The baby's mouth is open in a scream or cry. The ground is covered with dry leaves and twigs. The background is dark and indistinct.

"THE LEGEND OF THE YUUVRE SAID THAT AFTER IT HAD EATEN, IT WOULD WASH ITSELF IN THE RIVER.



"BUT FIRST IT WOULD REMOVE THAT RED, MONSTROUS EYE. FOR A FEW MINUTES, THE DEMON WOULD BE BLIND...



"...VULNERABLE.

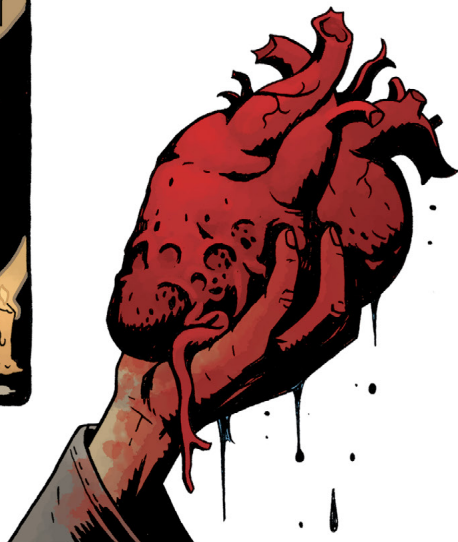


"IN TIME, I PERSUADED THE CREATURE TO REVEAL ALL THAT IT KNEW OF THE SUPERNATURAL WORLD. OF SECRET MAGIC AND HIDDEN DEMONS, AND THE NATURE OF POWER.



"WHEN IT HAD GIVEN ME ALL THAT IT COULD, I TOOK MORE.

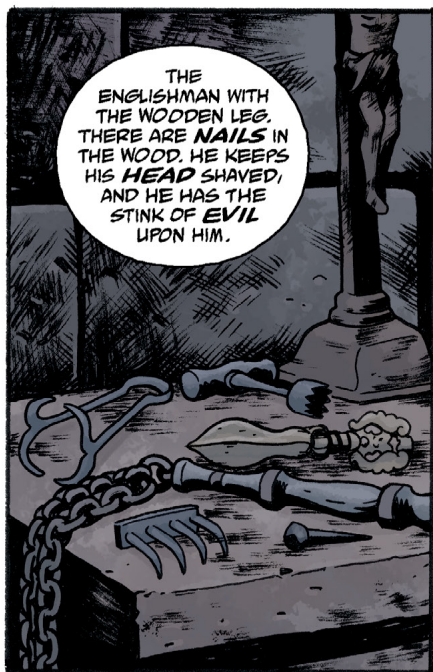
"I ATE ITS HEART."











THE
ENGLISHMAN WITH
THE WOODEN LEG.
THERE ARE **NAILS** IN
THE WOOD. HE KEEPS
HIS **HEAD** SHAVED,
AND HE HAS THE
STINK OF **EVIL**
UPON HIM.



I SWEAR,
I DON'T KNOW
HIM. I DIDN'T
SEE HIM.

PLEASE!
PLEASE,
YOU'VE GOT
TO LET ME
DOWN!



I WISH THAT
I COULD SAY
I BELIEVED YOU.
THINK **CAREFULLY,**
YOUNG ONES. SPEAK,
LEST I THINK YOU
WITCHES OR THE
SERVANTS OF
DEMONS.

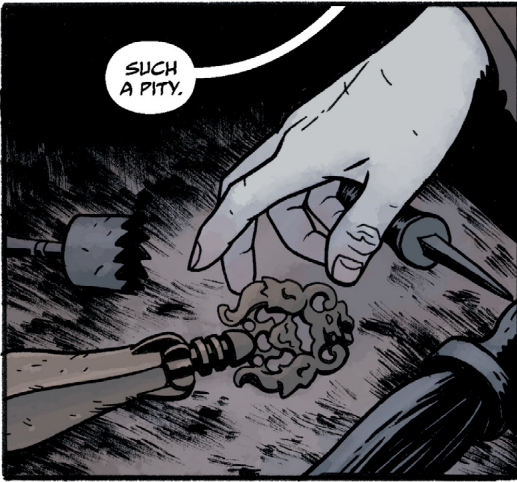


IF **THAT**
SHOULD HAPPEN,
WHAT COMES **AFTER**
WILL BE BETWEEN YOU
AND GOD. I AM MERELY
HIS HUMBLE
INSTRUMENT.



NO, I
SWEAR!
PLEASE!

YOU'VE GOT
TO LET ME DOWN!
PLEASE!
I CAN'T FEEL
MY ARMS!



SUCH
A PITY.



ALL
RIGHT!
WE SAW
HIM!

OH, GOD...
WE **MORE**
THAN SAW HIM!
THE VAMPIRES...THEY
TOOK OUR **BLOOD**
BUT SWORE TO
SPARE OUR LIVES
IF WE **LED** HIM
HERE!



AND WHAT
DID YOU
DO?

WE
BROUGHT
HIM, LIKE THEY
ASKED! THEY
PAID US AND WE
THOUGHT
HE WOULD BE
KILLED, BUT HE
SURVIVED
!



HE WAS HUNTING A
SCARRED MAN WITH
ONE EYE...A **VAMPIRE**.
THE **MAKER** OF THE
ONES WHO PAID US.
WE TOLD THE HUNTER
THE **DIRECTION**
IT TOOK OUT OF
LUCERNE.

HE WENT
AFTER IT.
WE CAN TELL
YOU, TOO.
PLEASE,
JUST SET US
FREE!

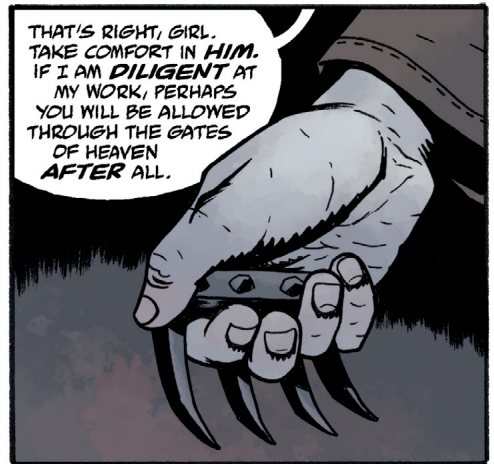


YES, YOU'LL
TELL ME. I'LL
NEED TO KNOW
HOW MANY
DAYS AGO HE
LEFT HERE, AND
WHAT **ROAD**
HE TOOK. BUT
I'M AFRAID
I **CAN'T**
SET YOU
FREE.

YOU HAVE
BEEN
BLOODED BY
THE DEVIL'S
TOUCH,
AND YOU
MUST BE
PURIFIED.



PLEASE,
GOD,
NO!!



THAT'S RIGHT, GIRL.
TAKE COMFORT IN **HIM**.
IF I AM **DILIGENT** AT
MY WORK, PERHAPS
YOU WILL BE ALLOWED
THROUGH THE GATES
OF HEAVEN
AFTER ALL.

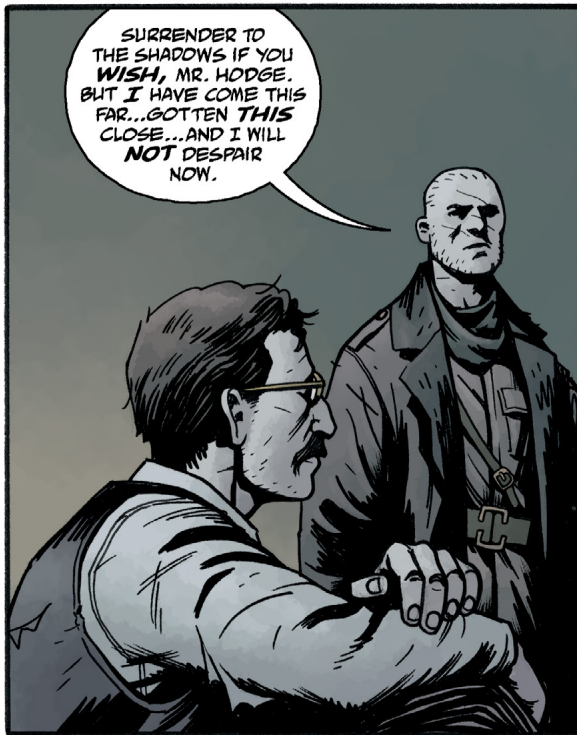




IF YOU'RE REFERRING TO **HAIGUS**, WE'VE FAILED IN **THAT** AS WELL.



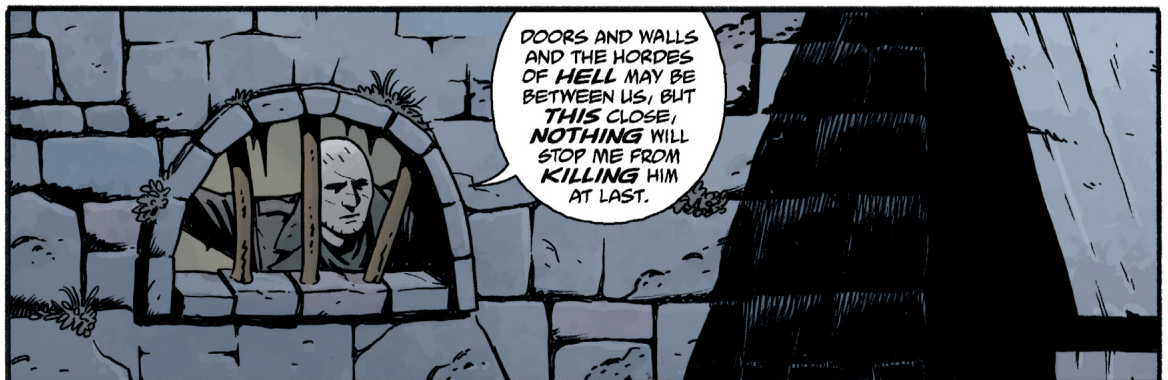
NEVER!



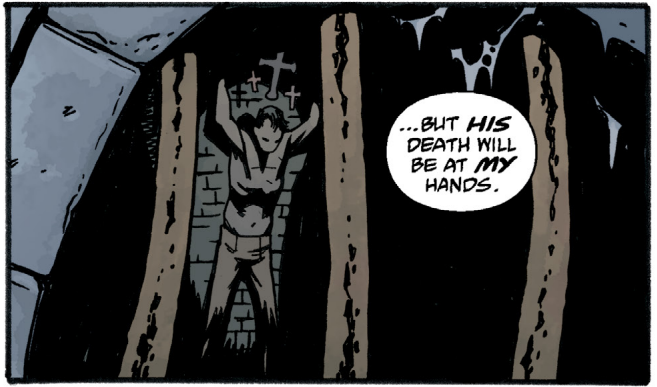
SURRENDER TO THE SHADOWS IF YOU **WISH**, MR. HODGE. BUT **I** HAVE COME THIS FAR...GOTTEN **THIS** CLOSE...AND I WILL **NOT** DESPAIR NOW.



THIS IS THE CLOSEST I HAVE BEEN TO HAIGUS SINCE THE NIGHT HE **MURDERED** MY **BRIDE**.



DOORS AND WALLS AND THE HORDES OF **HELL** MAY BE BETWEEN US, BUT **THIS** CLOSE, **NOTHING** WILL STOP ME FROM **KILLING** HIM AT LAST.



CHAPTER FOUR





IN THE HILLS
ABOVE
LUCERNE...



...HAVE MERCY
ON THE SOULS IN
PURGATORY...



...AND
ESPECIALLY
ON THOSE THAT
ARE MOST
FORSAKEN...



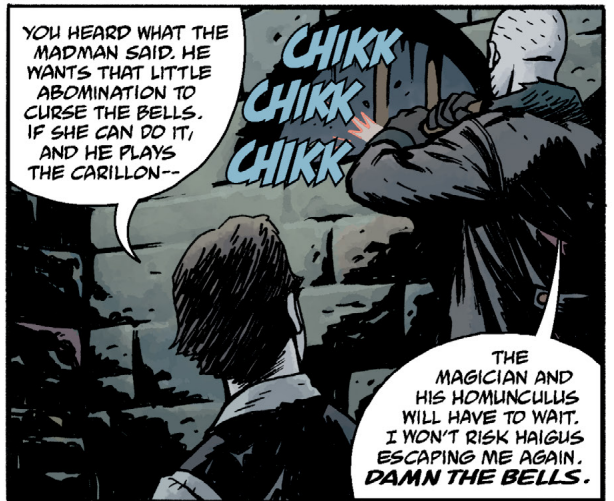
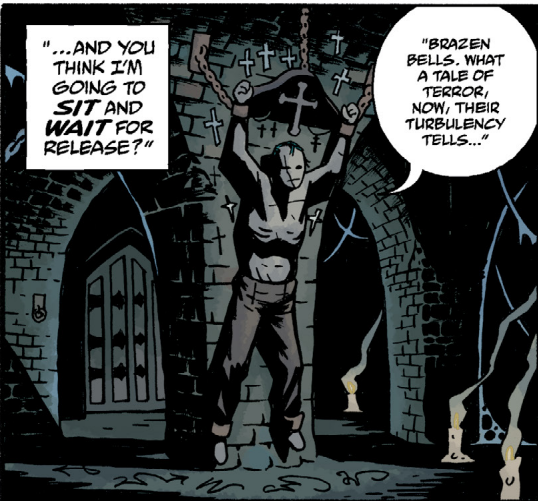
...DO **THOU**
DELIVER THEM
FROM THE DIRE
TORMENTS THEY
ENDURE...



...CALL THEM
AND ADMIT THEM
TO THY MOST
SWEET EMBRACE
IN PARADISE.



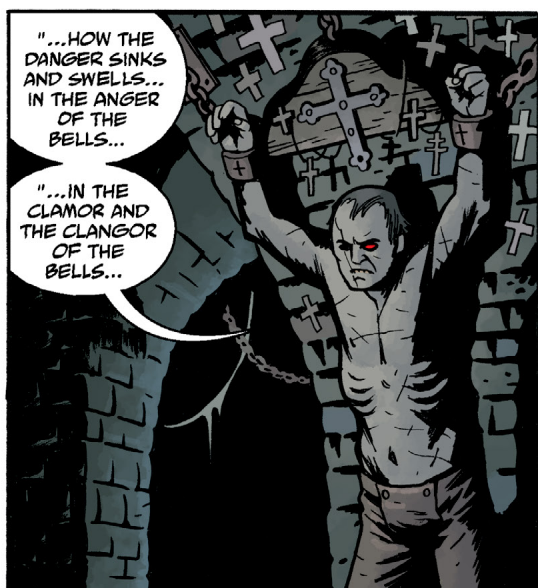






NO, SIR, DAMN
YOU. DAMN YOUR
SELFISHNESS.

CHIKK
CHIKK



"...HOW THE
DANGER SINKS
AND SWELLS...
IN THE ANGER
OF THE
BELLS...

"...IN THE
CLAMOR AND
THE CLANGOR
OF THE
BELLS...



"'IN THE SILENCE
OF THE NIGHT,
HOW WE SHIVER
WITH AFFRIGHT AT
THE MELANCHOLY
MENACE OF
THEIR TONE...'"

SKREERRAKK



"'...FOR EVERY SOUND
THAT FLOATS--FROM
THE RUST WITHIN
THEIR THROATS--
IS A GROAN...'"

EVEN
IF I SURVIVE, I
DON'T RECOMMEND
YOU TRY TO FOLLOW.
YOU'RE SAFER INSIDE
THAN OUT. I'LL
FETCH YOU COME
MORNING.



IF YOU DON'T STOP
BLAVATSKY'S CURSE,
WHEN THOSE BELLS RING
WE'LL BOTH BE SLAVES
JUST AS SURELY AS
ANYONE DOWN IN
BLUESCHTAG!



*FROM "THE BELLS," BY EDGAR ALLAN POE



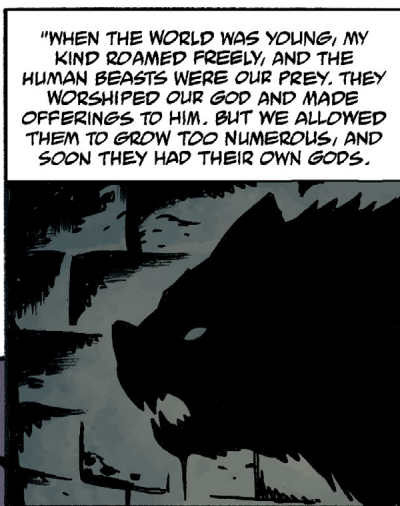
I'VE CHASED YOU HALFWAY ACROSS EUROPE.

THE MAGICIAN CAN WAIT HIS TURN.



YET THERE YOU ARE, AND HERE I AM, AND YOU'RE NO NEARER YOUR VENGEANCE THAN EVER.

EVEN IF YOU SHOULD SUCCEED IN KILLING ME, WHAT WILL IT ACCOMPLISH? WHAT HAS BEEN SET IN MOTION CANNOT BE STOPPED. THE WHEEL HAS TURNED. IT IS **OUR** TIME AGAIN.



"WHEN THE WORLD WAS YOUNG, MY KIND ROAMED FREELY, AND THE HUMAN BEASTS WERE OUR PREY. THEY WORSHIPED OUR GOD AND MADE OFFERINGS TO HIM. BUT WE ALLOWED THEM TO GROW TOO NUMEROUS, AND SOON THEY HAD THEIR OWN GODS.



"WE KILLED THEIR PRIESTS, BUT TOO LATE. THEY HAD BEGUN TO LOSE THEIR FEAR OF THE DARK.

"AND AS HUMANITY'S FEAR DIMINISHED, SO DID THE STRENGTH OF OUR MASTER.





"HE SLIPPED FROM THIS WORLD INTO ANOTHER, AND FELL INTO A SLUMBER OF EONS. FROM TIME TO TIME HE DREAMED NEW MONSTERS INTO THE WORLD...

"...BUT HE SLEPT ON.



"UNTIL YOUR WAR BEGAN, BRINGING DEATH AND TERROR ON A SCALE YOUR KIND HAD NEVER KNOWN...AND THE **RED KING** BEGAN TO STIR ONCE MORE.



"HIS DREAMS DISTURBED, MANY OF HIS CHILDREN BEGAN TO WAKE AFTER HUNDREDS, SOMETIMES THOUSANDS, OF YEARS HIDDEN AWAY FROM MAN.

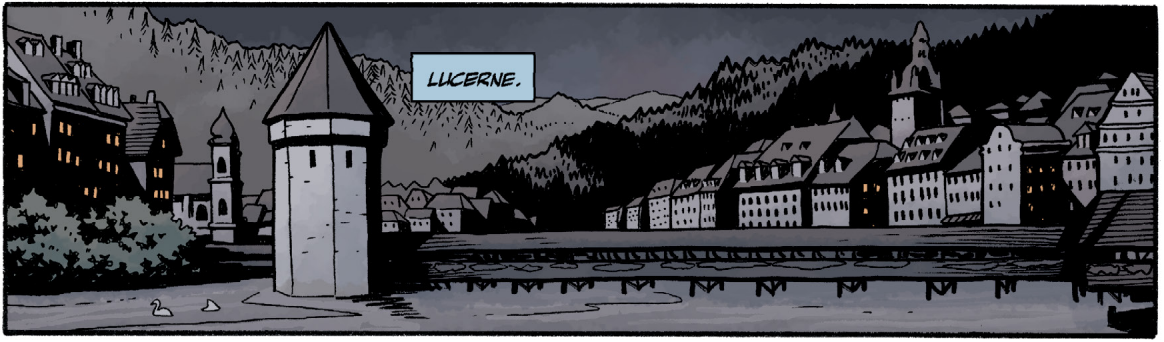
"OUR HIBERNATING MINDS HAD WITHERED, AND WE HAD BECOME LITTLE MORE THAN BEASTS.



"UNTIL A FOOLISH YOUNG SOLDIER **HURT** ME. UNTIL PAIN REMINDED ME **WHO** AND **WHAT** I AM. WHATEVER HAS HAPPENED SINCE IS **HIS** BURDEN TO BEAR."







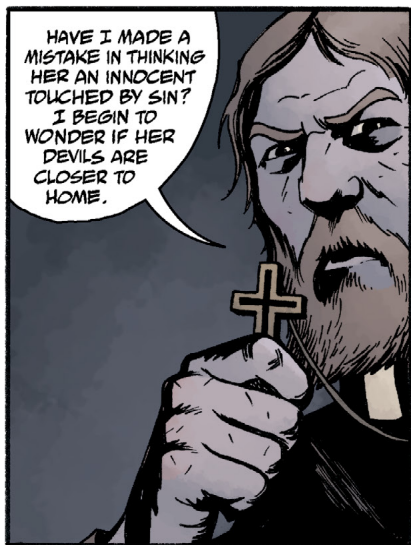


YOUR DAUGHTER IS VERY FORTUNATE. THE STAIN OF EVIL WAS UPON HER, BUT THROUGH THE BLESSINGS OF THE LORD, SHE HAS BEEN PURIFIED.

THIS IS **PURITY??** THIS YOU CALL A BLESSING?



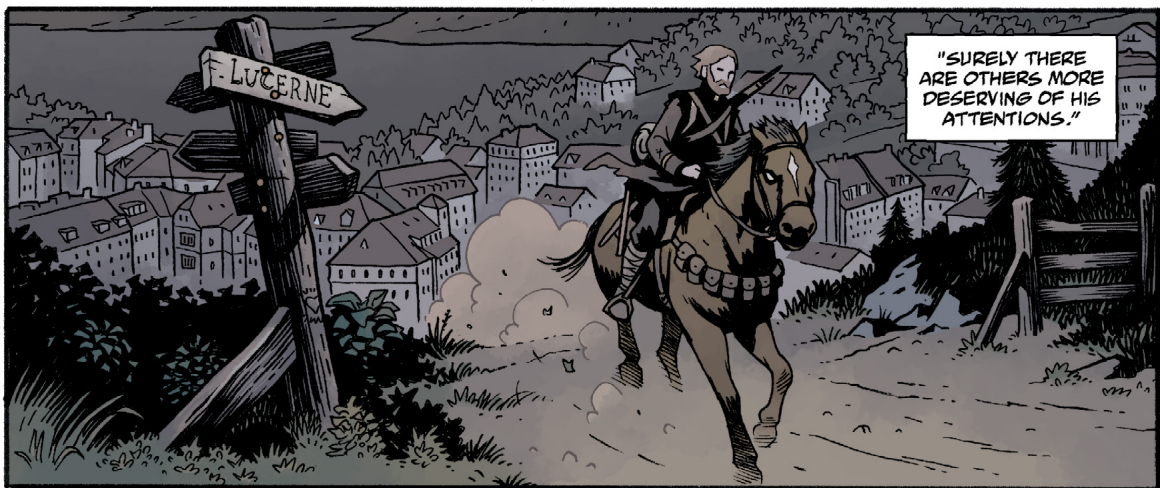
TEUFEL! DU BIST DER EINZIGE BÖSE, DEN ICH SEHEN KANN!



HAVE I MADE A MISTAKE IN THINKING HER AN INNOCENT TOUCHED BY SIN? I BEGIN TO WONDER IF HER DEVILS ARE CLOSER TO HOME.

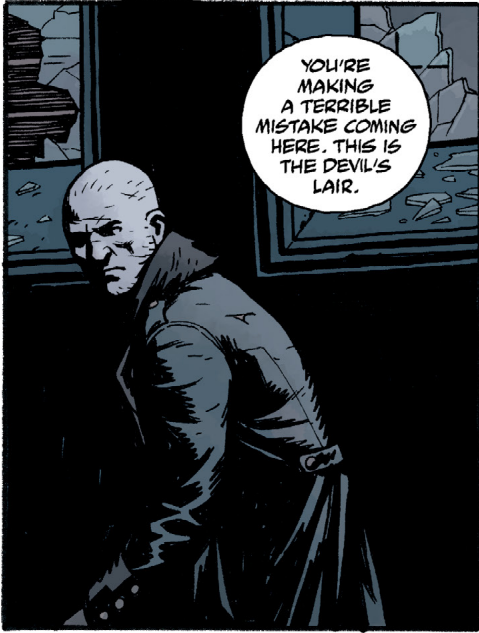


COME, FRANZISKA. THE INQUISITOR HAS **SAVED** OUR DAUGHTER. NOW LET HIM GO ABOUT HIS WORK...

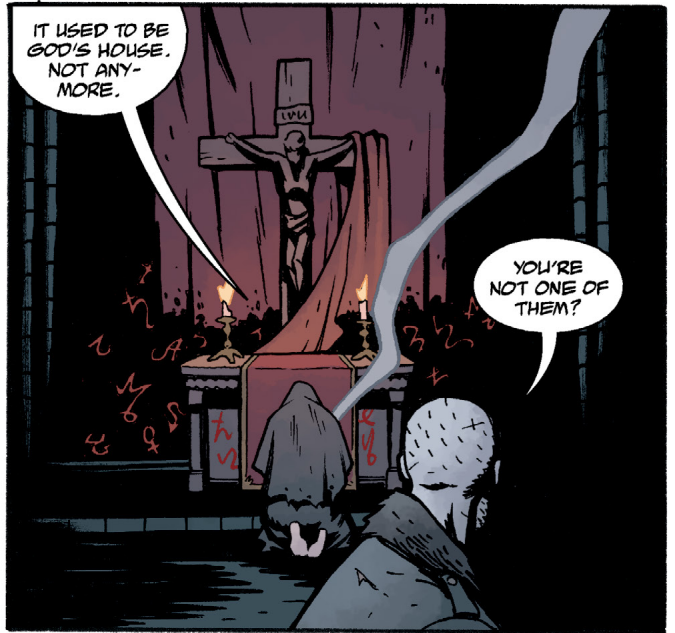


"SURELY THERE ARE OTHERS MORE DESERVING OF HIS ATTENTIONS."





YOU'RE MAKING A TERRIBLE MISTAKE COMING HERE. THIS IS THE DEVIL'S LAIR.



IT USED TO BE GOD'S HOUSE. NOT ANY-MORE.

YOU'RE NOT ONE OF THEM?



I AM. GOD, HELP ME, I AM.

AND YET GOD WILL NOT HELP ME. NOT NOW. SO I WILL NEED **YOUR** HELP, LORD BALTIMORE.



PLEASE.



I HAVE MADE MY CONFESSION. NOW I MUST TAKE COMMUNION, BUT I HAVEN'T THE STRENGTH.

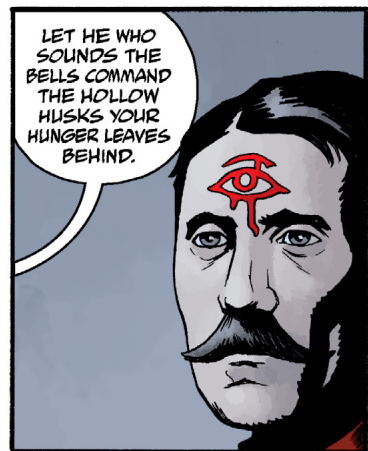
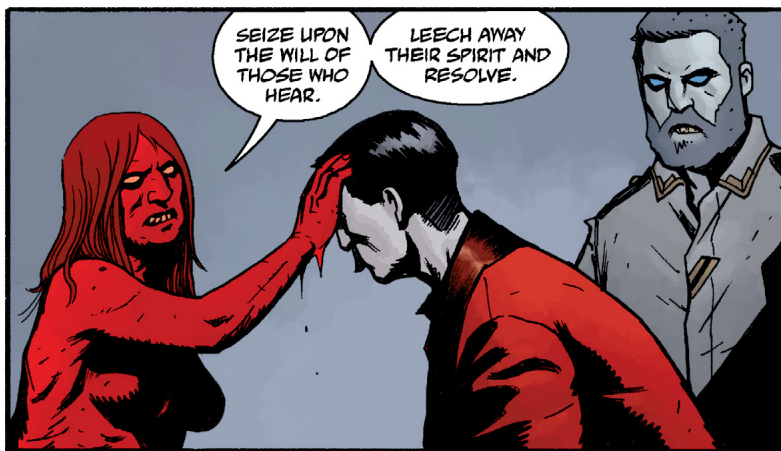
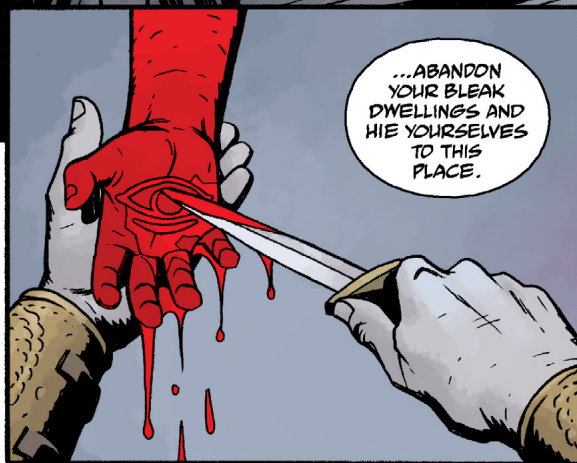


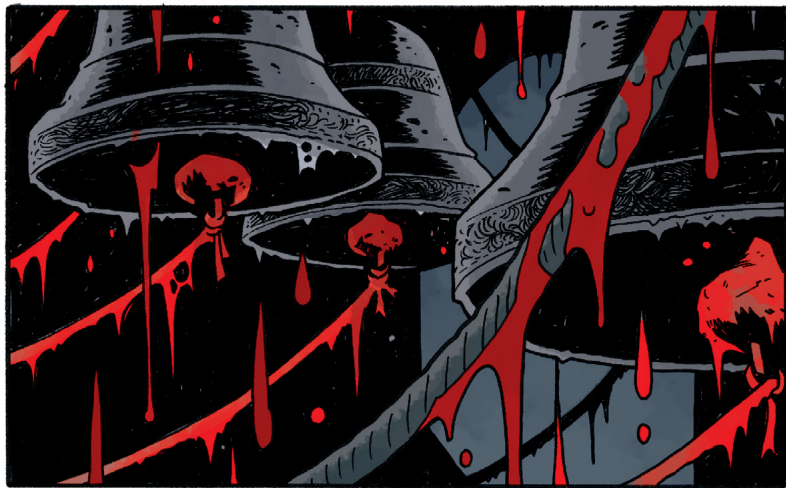


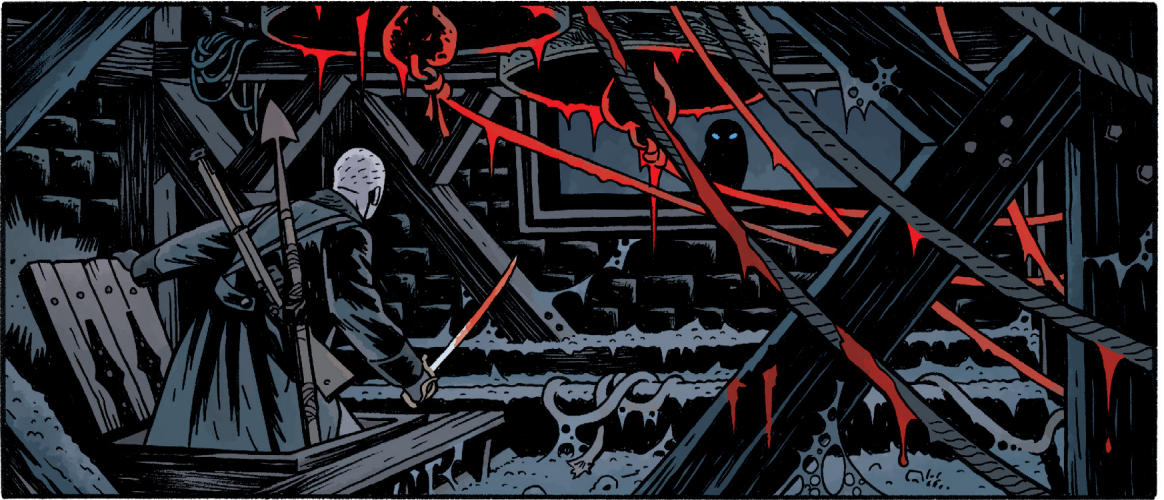








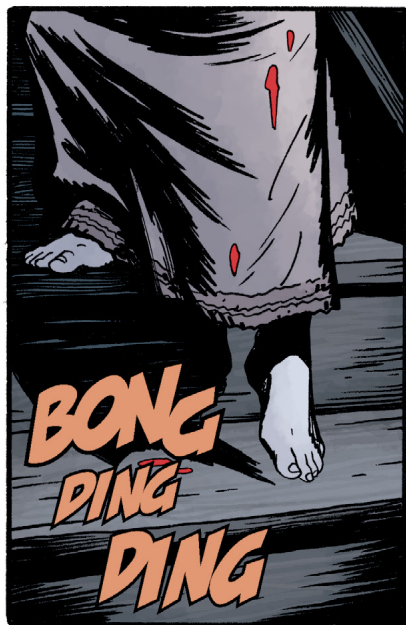


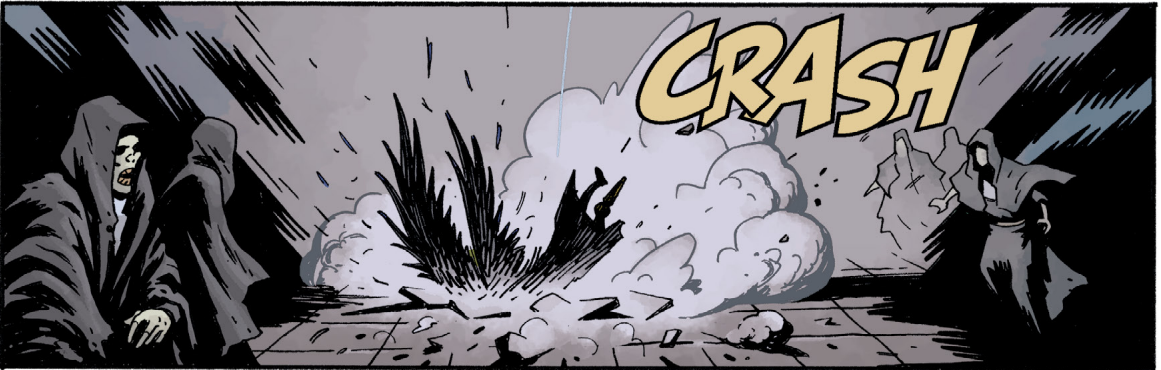
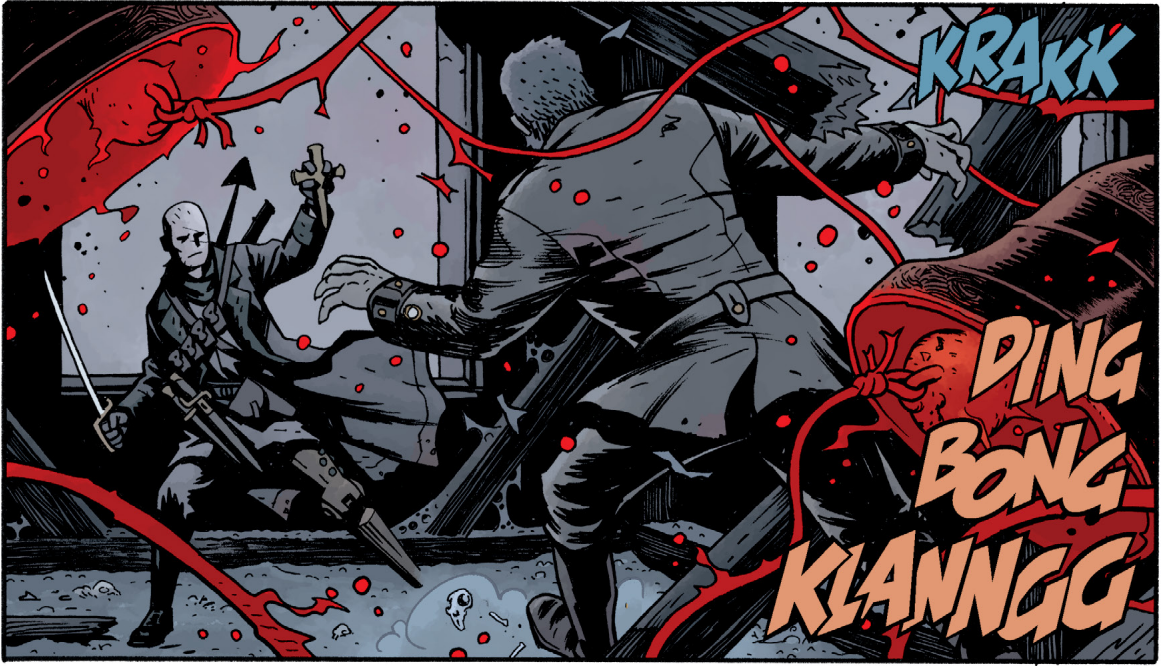




CHAPTER FIVE

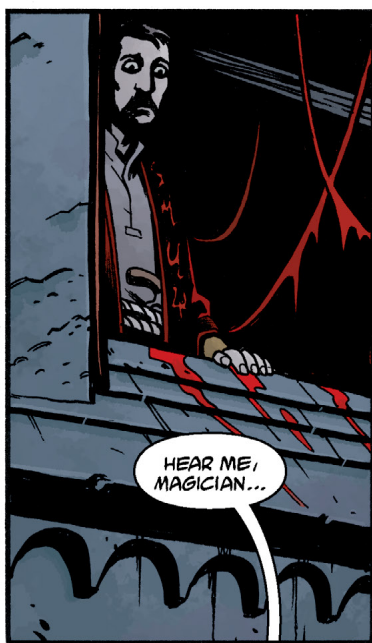
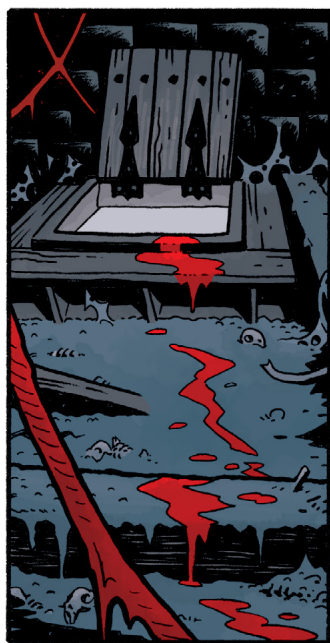
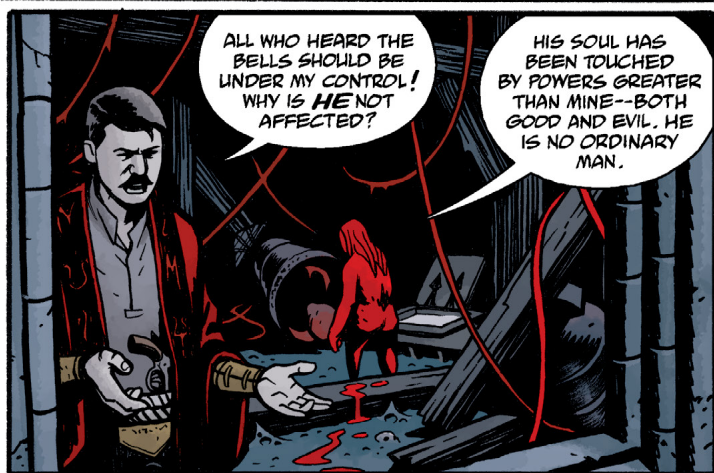






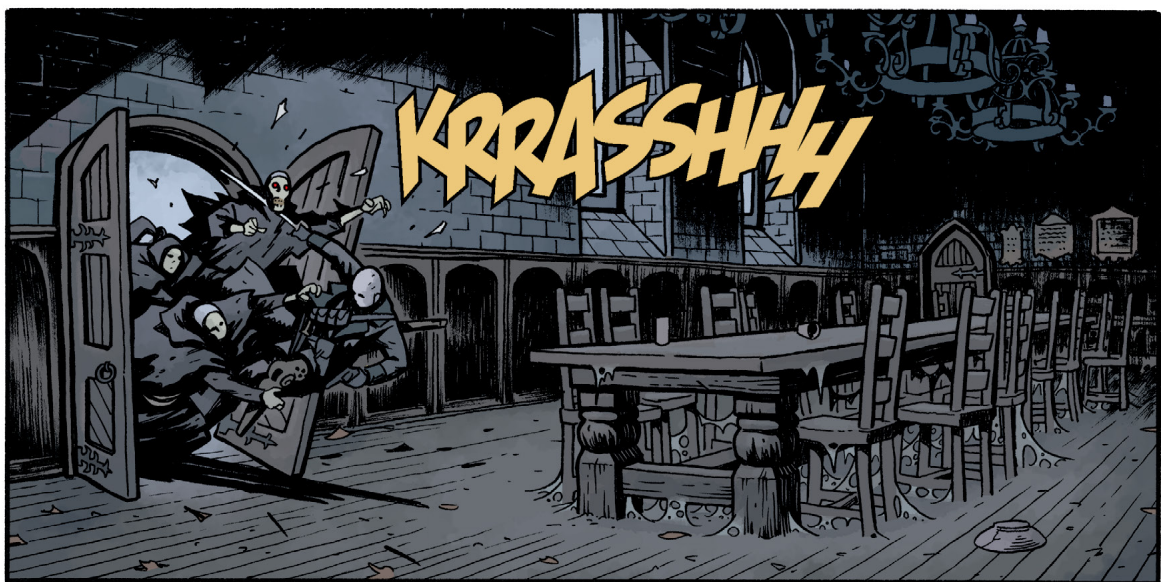














YOU'RE IN NO POSITION TO GIVE ORDERS. I AM THE ONE WITH POWER.

BLAVATSKY SAYS YOU ARE NO ORDINARY MAN, BUT YOU WILL BOW BEFORE ME IF YOU WANT TO LIVE. THE BELLS HAVE RUNG, NOW...



AN ENTIRE CITY RISES TO DO MY BIDDING, AN ARMY OF SLAVES WHO WILL LEAD MY CHARGE. I WILL GATHER THE MAGIC OF THE WORLD INTO MY TWO HANDS.

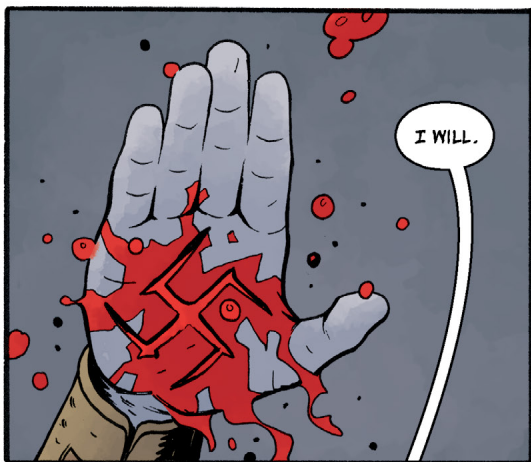


I WILL SUBJUGATE ALL WHO DARE TO STAND AGAINST ME. EVEN THE DARKNESS WILL FEAR ME. OLD GODS WILL FALL--



REALLY?

AND YOU THINK YOU'LL TAKE THEIR PLACE?



I WILL.

"THOSE WHO DO NOT JOIN ME WILL BE CRUSHED BENEATH THE BOOT HEELS OF MY ARMY."

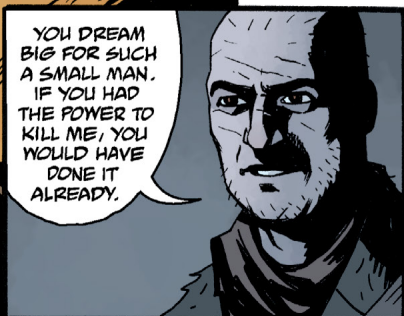


I WILL SHOW YOU **POWER**. I WILL **SHOW** YOU EXTRA-ORDINARY.

ULTIMA THULE.



YOU DREAM BIG FOR SUCH A SMALL MAN. IF YOU HAD THE POWER TO KILL ME, YOU WOULD HAVE DONE IT ALREADY.

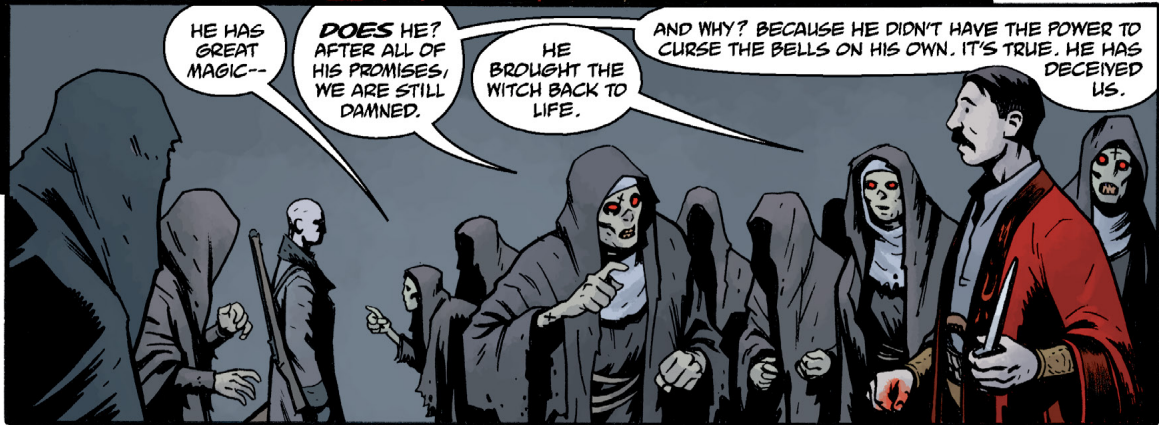


HE HAS GREAT MAGIC--

DOES HE? AFTER ALL OF HIS PROMISES, WE ARE STILL DAMNED.

HE BROUGHT THE WITCH BACK TO LIFE.

AND WHY? BECAUSE HE DIDN'T HAVE THE POWER TO CURSE THE BELLS ON HIS OWN. IT'S TRUE. HE HAS DECEIVED US.



I HAVE NOT. I WILL FULFILL MY PROMISE WHEN MY POWER IS AT ITS ZENITH!

I DON'T WANT TO TELL YOU YOUR BUSINESS, SISTERS...BUT THE EVIL IN YOU **HAS** NO CURE. IF HE PROMISED YOU OTHERWISE, THEN HE **IS** A LIAR...



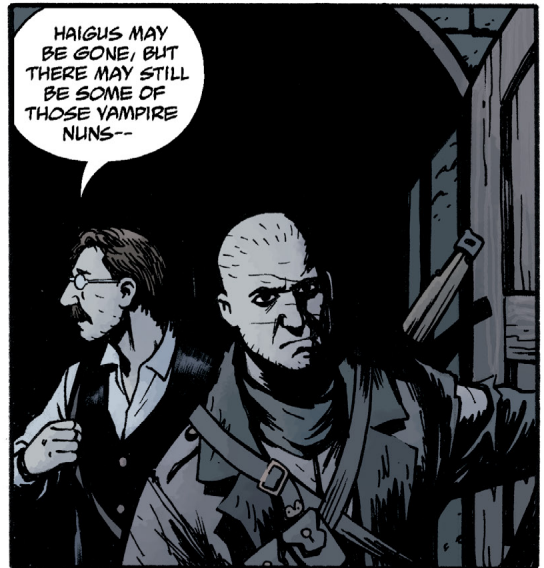




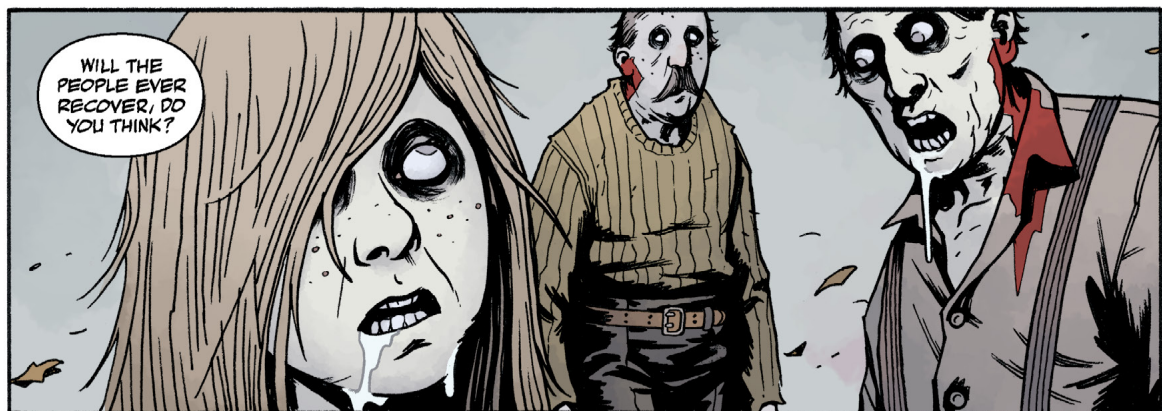


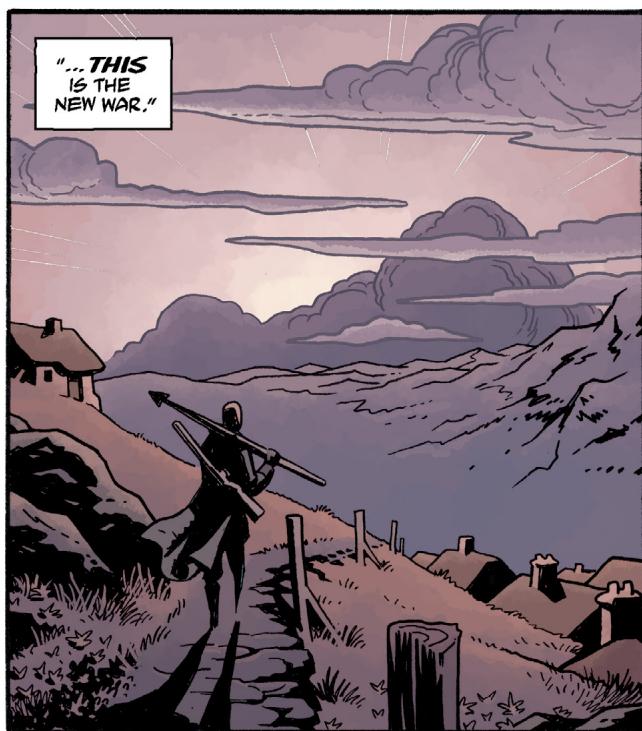






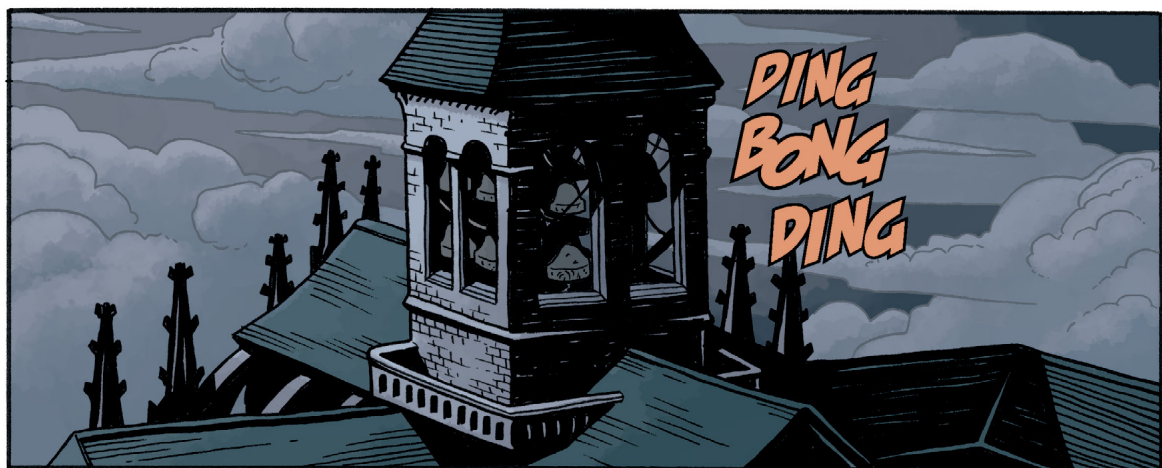












BALTIMORE™

THE CURSE BELLS

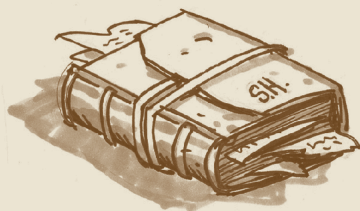
SKETCHBOOK

Notes by Scott Allie

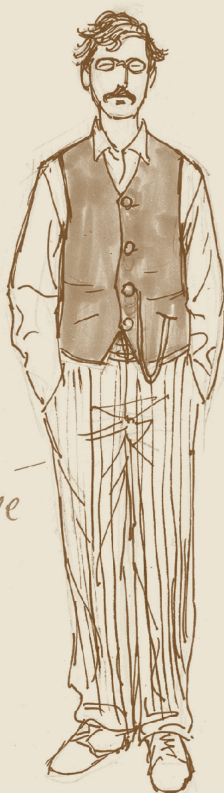
Hodge



puts coat on
when they leave



pin
stripe



Ben designs our supporting character,
the journalist Hodge.

The demons from the forests outside Lucerne in chapter 1.



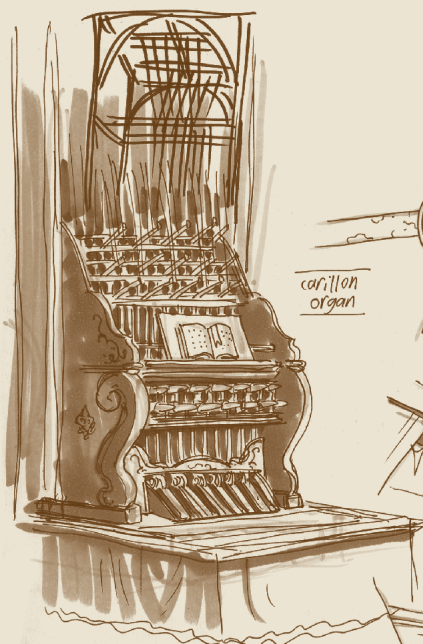
Fingers made of Bunched up Twigs



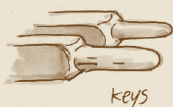
Quills



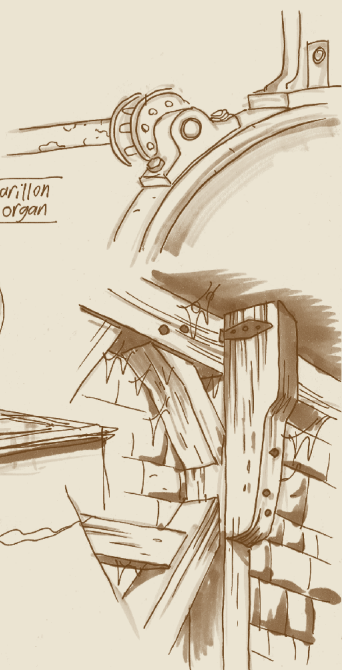
Blunt Horn things



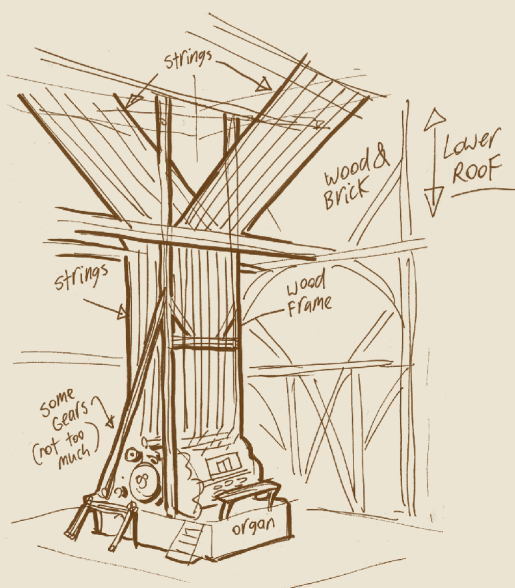
carillon
organ



keys



walls



Lower
Roof

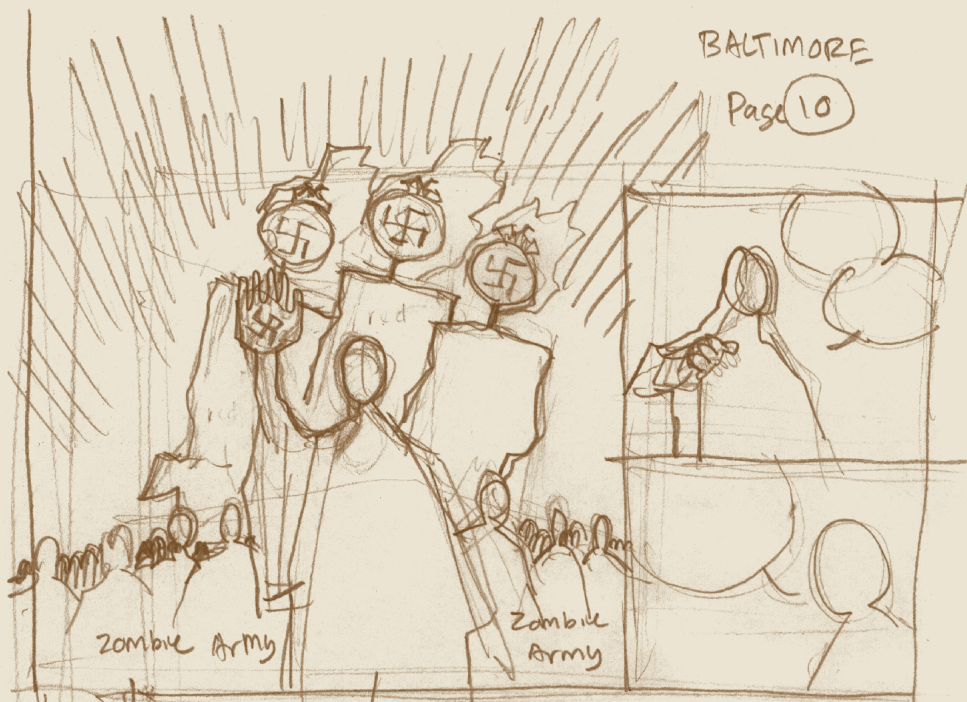
Our main villains: Madame Blavatsky and the madman. We knew that Blavatsky, a historical figure that we were excited to get into a comic, would be difficult to pull off as a naked midget. Ben tried multiple costume options, and we used the bizarre Nicolas Roeg thriller *Don't Look Now* as a point of reference. Adding more shadows to Blavatsky often helped.

Bottom: Ben's designs for the carillon keyboard, the device that controls the bells.



BALTIMORE

Page 10



- Same robe (with some hair and mustache) as in panel 2 but more dramatic lighting.
- Behind him are three huge red banners

Top of banner three is a dark metal ring with dark metal swastika suspended inside - maybe with metal eagle or dragon on the top -- This part is magically on fire.



Red
No design

- Across lower part of panel is zombie army - A shadowy mass of figures with glowing eyes.

Chris initially scripted chapter 5, page 10, with more panels, but Mike wanted the first panel to have more impact. Rather than rewriting, he provided this layout to open up the top half of the page.

BPRD - GOD & MONSTERS TRADE

Burnt
Texas

Axe w/
sun

FIRE

creature

Zombies

LIZ

creature
formed of
Ectoplasm

Johann

Zombie
Russizn



Mike's designs for the *Curse Bells* #1 cover, done on the same sheet as his *B.P.R.D. Hell on Earth: Gods and Monsters* trade cover (facing); his study for Haigus's figure on the *Curse Bells* #2 cover, alongside the variant cover for *Hellboy: The Fury* #3.





Mike struggled with the *Curse Bells* #5 cover. In his sketchbook he worked out a design featuring an owl (facing), but he couldn't make the owl work, so when he started drawing the cover, he replaced the owl with Baltimore, but abandoned that idea too (below).





Facing: Mike returned to the sketchbook, replacing Baltimore with the vampire nuns; at the same time that he was working out the *Curse Bells* #5 cover, he started planning the cover for this collection.

With the concept for *The Curse Bells* #5 worked out, he did the small sketch (below) to finalize the composition and some details.





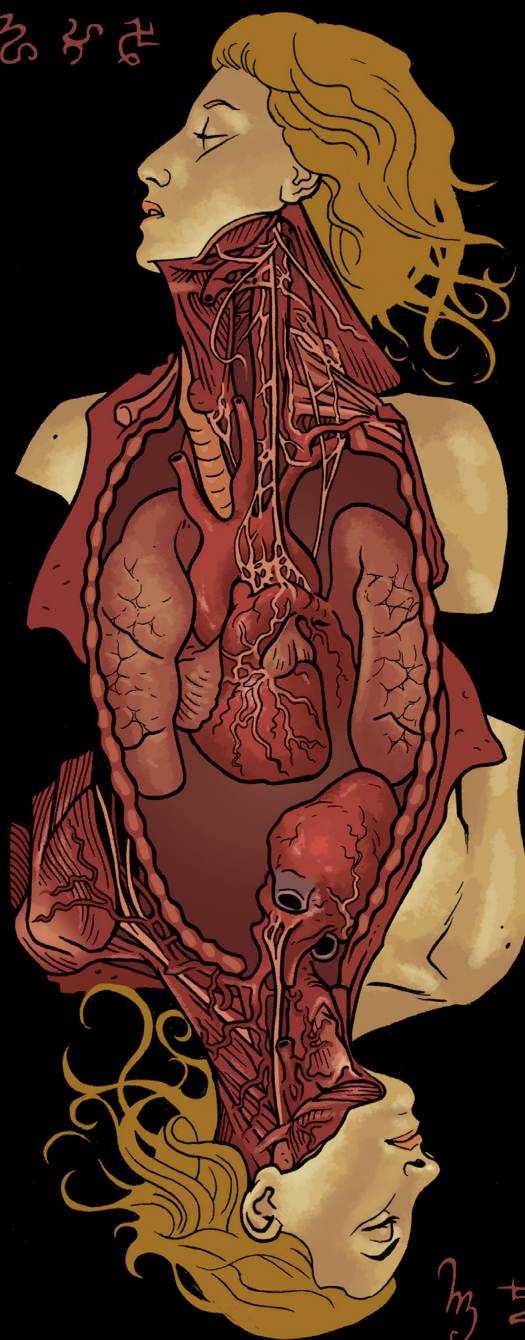
Final sketches for the cover of this volume.

This page: Nearly final pencils for a *Baltimore* cover, although none of us remembers what this was for, or exactly when it was done. It may have been a rejected cover for *The Curse Bells* #1.

Following pages: "I wanted to do some pinups for this book and took the opportunity to do weird horror images that seem like they might belong in Baltimore's world somehow. Also I wanted to draw the *vouivre* again. Cheers!" —Ben Stenbeck



4 3 2 1



3 2 1 0

Adèle et Zoé



Frederick ~1917~



Marta

WILHELM NEUMANN



Gott helfe mir.
Es war immer hier!
Es wurde in den
MUSIC versteckt!

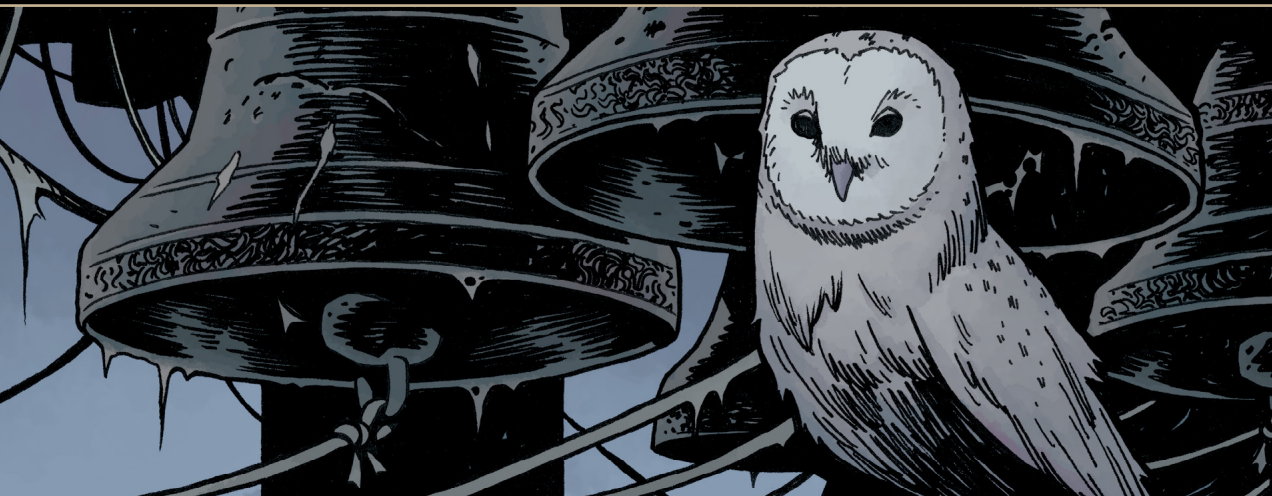
MIKE MIGNOLA's fascination with ghosts and monsters began at an early age; reading *Dracula* at age twelve introduced him to Victorian literature and folklore, from which he has never recovered. Starting in 1982 as a bad inker for Marvel Comics, he swiftly evolved into a not-so-bad artist. By the late 1980s, he had begun to develop his own unique graphic style, with mainstream projects like *Cosmic Odyssey* and *Batman: Gotham by Gaslight*. In 1994, he published the first *Hellboy* series through Dark Horse. As of this writing there are twelve *Hellboy* graphic novels (with more on the way), several spinoff titles (*B.P.R.D.*, *Lobster Johnson*, *Abe Sapien*, and *Sir Edward Grey: Wüchfinder*), prose books, animated films, and two live-action films starring Ron Perlman. Along the way he worked on Francis Ford Coppola's film *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992), was a production designer for Disney's *Atlantis: The Lost Empire* (2001), and was the visual consultant to director Guillermo del Toro on *Blade II* (2002), *Hellboy* (2004), and *Hellboy 2: The Golden Army* (2008). Mike's books have earned numerous awards and are published in a great many countries. Mike lives somewhere in southern California with his wife, daughter, and cat.

CHRISTOPHER GOLDEN is the author of such novels as *Of Saints and Shadows*, *The Myth Hunters*, *The Boys Are Back in Town*, and *Strangewood*. He has also written books for teens and young adults, including *When Rose Wakes*, *Soulless*, *Poison Ink*, and *The Secret Journeys of Jack London*, coauthored with Tim Lebbon. His other work with Mike Mignola includes the novel *Baltimore; or, The Steadfast Tin Soldier and the Vampire*. Golden was born and raised in Massachusetts, where he still lives with his family. His original novels have been published in more than fourteen languages in countries around the world. Please visit him at ChristopherGolden.com

BEN STENBECK discovered his joy of comics after he found a copy of *2000 AD* when he was six years old. He has worked as an illustrator and designer on everything from films to comics and games, with a lot of commercial illustration work in between. He has worked on several titles for Dark Horse Comics, including *Living with the Dead*, *Wüchfinder: In the Service of Angels*, and *B.P.R.D.: The Ectoplasmic Man*. He lives in Auckland, New Zealand, with his wife and two sons and three horses.

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